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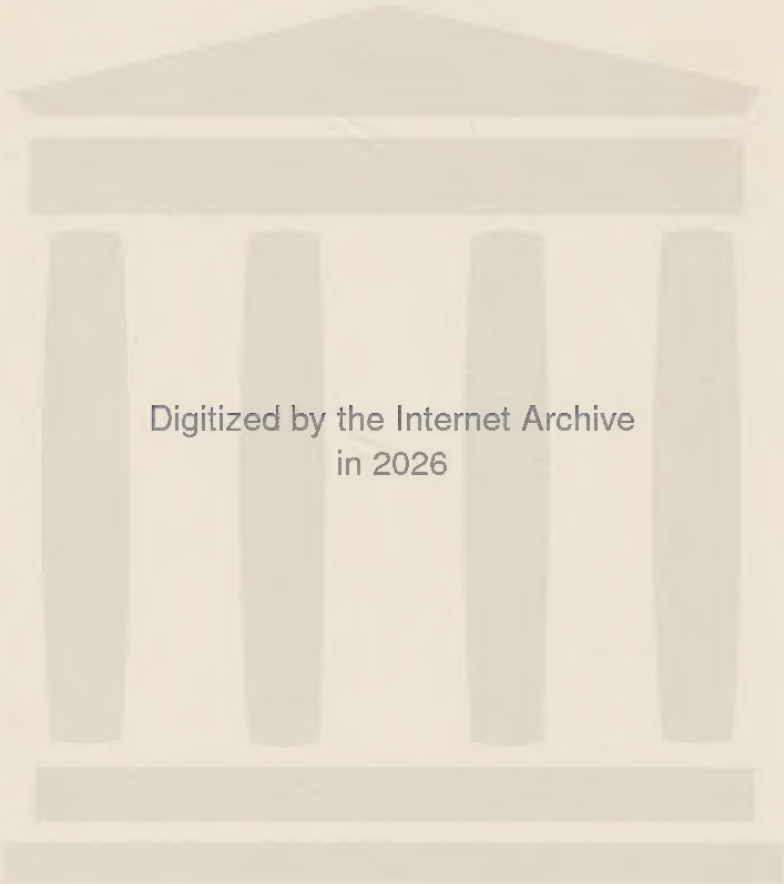
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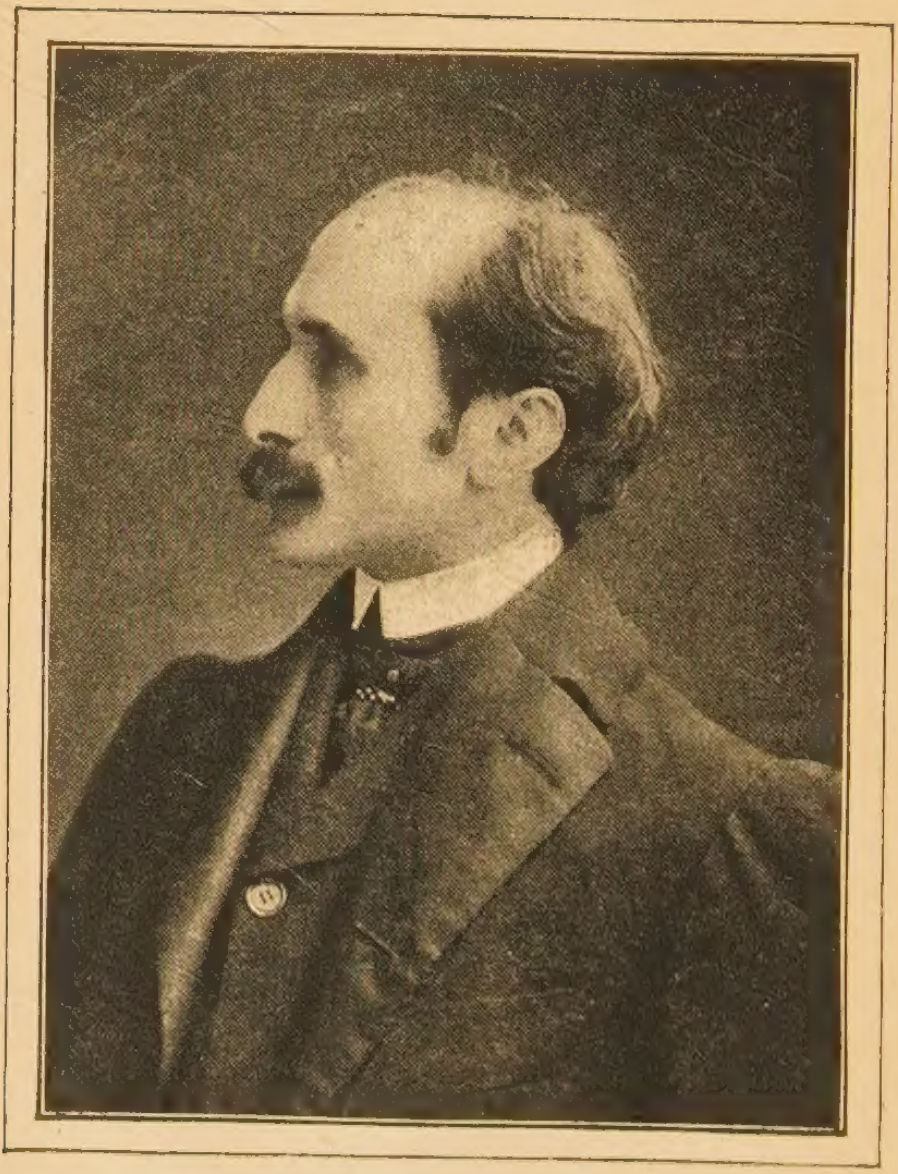

EDMOND ROSTAND

CYRANO DE BERGERAC

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CYRANO DE BERGERAC

BY

EDMOND ROSTAND

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH BY

GERTRUDE HALL

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1898d

NEW YORK
DOUBLEDAY & McCLURE CO.
1898

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INTRODUCTION.

WHILE translating Cyrano de Bergerac, I have had moments of fearing lest certain one of his qualities should dispose against him, at the start, Anglo-Saxon audiences, reared in a different ideal. I mean his boastfulness. I have hoped heartily that it would not, making them less sensitive to all there is of him beside. Indeed, boasting has a sort of picturesque good reason for being, when the boaster is better than all his boasts. Does one quarrel with

"Not marble, nor the gilded monuments
Of princes, shall out-live this powerful rhyme?"

Cyrano is so comprehensible! To Cyrano the world he lives in must be filled with striking generous deeds and sounding generous phrases. The world is slow in performing the first, so he performs them himself. Then, the care of exalting them cannot be left with the world, afflicted with dullness as with slowness, so he talks about them. I am sure Cyrano cares very little

that himself should be in question. He merely wishes fine deeds and fine sentiments to be, and to make surest and shortest work, furnishes them himself. It is very innocent.

On the other hand, I fancy it impossible to follow the whole play and not get the contagion of Cyrano's generosity. "What are you saying? That it is no use? . . . I know it! But one does not fight because there is hope of winning! It is much finer to fight when it is no use!" Cyrano exclaims, in the last fight of all. When that night he entered God's house, and, in saluting, broadly swept the azure threshold with his very clean plume, what eloquent and touching tirade must he have made to Gascony Cadets in bliss, at the sure vision of his fighting not having been in vain, of his having inspired others—(remote audiences in America, among them)—to detest and fight the ancient enemies that were his: Lies, Compromises, Prejudices, base Expedients,—the whole multitude of things ugly and petty!

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

Cyrano de Bergerac.
Christian de Neuvillette.
Comte de Guiche.
Ragueneau.
Le Bret.
Captain Carbon de Castel-Jaloux.
Lignière.
De Valvert.
Montfleury.
Bellerose.
Jodelet.
Cuigy.
Brissaille.
A Bore.
A Mousquetaire.
Other Mousquetaire.
A Spanish Officer.
A Light-Cavalry Man.
A Doorkeeper.
A Burgher.
His Son.
A Pickpocket.
A Spectator.
A Watchman.
Bertrandou the Fifer.
A Capuchin.

Dramatis Personæ.

Two Musicians.
Seven Cadets.
Three Marquises.
Poets.
Pastrycooks.

Roxane.
Sister Martha.
Lise.
The Sweetmeat Vender.
Mother Margaret.
The Duenna.
Sister Claire.
An Actress.
A Soubrette.
A Flower-Girl.
Pages.

The crowd, bourgeois, marquises, mousquetaires, pickpockets, pastrycooks, poets, Gascony Cadets, players, fiddlers, pages, children, Spanish soldiers, spectators, précieuses, actresses, bourgeoises, nuns, etc.

CYRANO DE BERGERAC

CYRANO DE BERGERAC.

ACT FIRST.

A PLAY AT THE HOTEL DE BOURGOGNE.

The great hall of the Hotel de Bourgogne, in 1640. A sort of tennis-court arranged and decorated for theatrical performances.

The hall is a long rectangle, seen obliquely, so that one side of it constitutes the background, which runs from the position of the front wing at the right, to the line of the furthest wing at the left, and forms an angle with the stage, which is equally seen obliquely.

This stage is furnished, on both sides, along the wings, with benches. The drop-curtain is composed of two tapestry hangings, which can be drawn apart. Above a Harlequin cloak, the royal escutcheon. Broad steps lead from the raised platform of the stage into the house. On either side of these steps, the musicians' seats. A row of candles fills the office of footlights.

Two galleries run along the side; the

lower one is divided into boxes. No seats in the pit, which is the stage proper. At the back of the pit, that is to say, at the right, in the front, a few seats raised like steps, one above the other; and, under a stairway which leads to the upper seats, and of which the lower end only is visible, a stand decked with small candelabra, jars full of flowers, flagons and glasses, dishes heaped with sweetmeats, etc.

In the centre of the background, under the box-tier, the entrance to the theatre, large door which half opens to let in the spectators. On the panels of this door, and in several corners, and above the sweetmeat stand, red playbills announcing La Clorise.

At the rise of the curtain, the house is nearly dark, and still empty. The chandeliers are let down in the middle of the pit, until time to light them.

The audience, arriving gradually. Cavaliers, burghers, lackeys, pages, the fiddlers, etc.

A tumult of voices is heard beyond the door; enter brusquely a Cavalier.

Doorkeeper (*running in after him*). Not so fast! Your fifteen pence!

CAVALIER. I come in admission free !

DOORKEEPER. And why ?

CAVALIER. I belong to the king's light cavalry !

DOORKEEPER (*to another* CAVALIER *who has entered*). You ?

SECOND CAVALIER. I do not pay !

DOORKEEPER. But . . .

SECOND CAVALIER. I belong to the mousquetaires !

FIRST CAVALIER (*to the* SECOND). It does not begin before two. The floor is empty. Let us have a bout with foils. (*They fence with foils they have brought.*)

A LACKEY (*entering*). Pst ! . . Flanquin !

OTHER LACKEY (*arrived a moment before*). Champagne ? . .

FIRST LACKEY (*taking a pack of cards from his doublet and showing it to* SECOND LACKEY). Cards. Dice. (*Sits down on the floor.*) Let us have a game.

SECOND LACKEY (*sitting down likewise*). You rascal, willingly !

FIRST LACKEY (*taking from his pocket a bit of candle which he lights and sticks on the floor*). I prigged an eyeful of my master's light !

ONE OF THE WATCH (*to a flower-girl, who*

comes forward). It is pleasant getting here before the lights. (*Puts his arm around her waist.*)

ONE OF THE FENCERS (*taking a thrust*). Hit!

ONE OF THE GAMBLERS. Clubs!

THE WATCHMAN (*pursuing the girl*). A kiss!

THE FLOWER-GIRL (*repulsing him*). We shall be seen!

THE WATCHMAN (*drawing her into a dark corner*). No, we shall not!

A MAN (*sitting down on the floor with others who have brought provisions.*) By coming early, you get a comfortable chance to eat.

A BURGHER (*leading his son*). This should be a good place, my boy. Let us stay here.

ONE OF THE GAMBLERS. Ace wins!

A MAN (*taking a bottle from under his cloak and sitting down*). A proper toper, toping Burgundy, (*drinks*) I say should tope it in Burgundy House!

THE BURGHER (*to his son*). Might one not suppose we had stumbled into some house of evil fame? (*Points with his cane at the drunkard.*) Guzzlers! . . . (*In breaking guard one of the fencers jostles*

him.) Brawlers ! . . . (*He falls between the gamblers.*) Gamesters ! . . .

THE WATCHMAN (*behind him, still teasing the flower-girl*). A kiss !

THE BURGHER (*dragging his son precipitately away.*) Bless my soul ! . . . And to reflect that in this very house, my son, were given the plays of the great Rotrou !

THE YOUTH. And those of the great Corneille !

(*A band of* PAGES *holding hands rush in performing a farandole and singing.*)

PAGES. Tra la la la la la la la ! . . .

DOORKEEPER (*severely to the* PAGES). Look, now ! . . . you pages, you ! none of your tricks !

FIRST PAGE (*with wounded dignity.*) Sir ! . . . this want of confidence . . . (*As soon as the doorkeeper has turned away, briskly to the* SECOND PAGE.) Have you a string about you ?

SECOND PAGE. With a fish-hook at the end !

FIRST PAGE. We will sit up there and angle for wigs !

A PICKPOCKET (*surrounded by a number of individuals of dubious appearance.*) Come, now, my little hopefuls, and learn

gentlemen, come in a moment before.) Cuigy, Brissaille! (*Effusive embraces*).

CUIGY. We are of the faithful indeed. We are here before the lights.

THE MARQUIS. Ah, do not speak of it! . . . It has put me in such a humor!

OTHER MARQUIS. Be comforted, marquis . . . here comes the candle-lighter!

THE AUDIENCE (*greeting the arrival of the candle-lighter*). Ah! . . .

(*Many gather around the chandelier while they are being lighted. A few have taken seats in the galleries.* LIGNIÈRE *enters, arm in arm with* CHRISTIAN DE NEUVILLETTE. LIGNIÈRE, *in somewhat disordered apparel; appearance of gentlemanly drunkard.* CHRISTIAN, *becomingly dressed, but in clothes of a slightly obsolete elegance.*)

CUIGY. Lignière!

BRISSAILLE (*laughing*). Not tipsy yet?

LIGNIÈRE (*low to* CHRISTIAN). Shall I present you? (CHRISTIAN *nods assent.*) Baron de Neuvillette . . . (*Exchange of bows*).

THE AUDIENCE (*cheering the ascent of the first lighted chandelier*). Ah! . . .

CUIGY (*to* BRISSAILLE, *looking at* CHRISTIAN). A charming head . . . charming!

FIRST MARQUIS (*who has overheard*). Pooh! . . .

LIGNIÈRE (*presenting* CHRISTIAN). Messieurs de Cuigy . . . de Brissaille . . .

CHRISTIAN (*bowing*). Delighted! . . .

FIRST MARQUIS (*to* SECOND). He is a pretty fellow enough, but is dressed in the fashion of some other year!

LIGNIÈRE (*to* CUIGY). Monsieur is lately arrived from Touraine.

CHRISTIAN. Yes, I have been in Paris not over twenty days. I enter the Guards to-morrow, the Cadets.

FIRST MARQUIS (*looking at those who appear in the boxes*). There comes the présidente Aubry!

SWEETMEAT VENDER. Oranges! Milk!

THE FIDDLERS (*tuning*). La . . la . . .

CUIGY (*to* CHRISTIAN, *indicating the house which is filling*). A good house! . . .

CHRISTIAN. Yes, crowded.

FIRST MARQUIS. The whole of fashion!

(*They give the names of the women, as, very brilliantly attired, these enter the boxes. Exchange of bows and smiles.*)

SECOND MARQUIS. Mesdames de Guéménée . . .

CUIGY. De Bois-Dauphin . . .

FIRST MARQUIS. Whom . . . time was! . . . we loved! . . .

BRISSAILLE. . . . de Chavigny . .

SECOND MARQUIS. Who still plays havoc with our hearts!

LIGNIÈRE. *Tiens*! Monsieur de Corneille has come back from Rouen!

THE YOUTH (*to his father*). The Academy is present?

THE BURGHER. Yes . . I perceive more than one member of it. Yonder are Boudu, Boissat and Cureau . . . Porchères, Colomby, Bourzeys, Bourdon, Arbaut . . . All names of which not one will be forgotten. What a beautiful thought it is!

FIRST MARQUIS. Attention! Our précieuses are coming into their seats . . . Barthénoide, Urimédonte, Cassandace, Félixérie . . .

SECOND MARQUIS. Ah, how exquisite are their surnames! . . . Marquis, can you tell them off, all of them?

FIRST MARQUIS. I can tell them off, all of them, Marquis!

LIGNIÈRE (*drawing* CHRISTIAN *aside*). Dear fellow, I came in here to be of use to you. The lady does not come. I revert to my vice!

CHRISTIAN (*imploring*). No! No! . . . You who turn into ditties Town and Court, stay by me : you will be able to tell me for whom it is I am dying of love!

THE LEADER OF THE VIOLINS (*rapping on his desk with his bow*). Gentlemen! . . . (*He raises his bow.*)

SWEETMEAT VENDER. Macaroons . . . Citronade . . .

(*The fiddles begin playing.*)

CHRISTIAN. I fear . . . oh, I fear to find that she is fanciful and intricate! I dare not speak to her, for I am of a simple wit. The language written and spoken in these days bewilders and baffles me. I am a plain soldier . . . shy, to boot.—She is always at the right, there, the end: the empty box.

LIGNIÈRE (*with show of leaving*). I am going.

CHRISTIAN (*still attempting to detain him*). Oh, no ! . . . Stay, I beseech you !

LIGNIÈRE. I cannot. D'Assoucy is expecting me at the pot-house. Here is a mortal drought!

SWEETMEAT VENDER (*passing before him with a tray*). Orangeade ? . . .

LIGNIÈRE. Ugh !

SWEETMEAT VENDER. Milk ? . . .

LIGNIÈRE. Pah ! . . .

SWEETMEAT VENDER. Lacrima ? . . .

LIGNIÈRE. Stop ! (*To* CHRISTIAN). I will tarry a bit. . . . Let us see this lacrima ? (*Sits down at the sweetmeat stand. The* VENDER *pours him a glass of lacrima*).

(*Shouts among the audience at the entrance of a little, merry-faced, roly-poly man.*)

AUDIENCE. Ah, Ragueneau ! . . .

LIGNIÈRE (*to* CHRISTIAN). Ragueneau, who keeps the great cook-shop.

RAGUENEAU (*attired like a pastrycook in his Sunday best, coming quickly toward* LIGNIÈRE). Monsieur, have you seen Monsieur de Cyrano ?

LIGNIÈRE (*presenting* RAGUENEAU *to* CHRISTIAN). The pastrycook of poets and of players !

RAGUENEAU (*abashed*). Too much honor. . . .

LIGNIÈRE. No modesty ! . . . Mecænas ! . . .

RAGUENEAU. It is true, those gentlemen are among my customers. . .

LIGNIÈRE. Debitors ! . . . A considerable poet himself. . . .

RAGUENEAU. It has been said ! . . .

LIGNIÈRE. Daft on poetry ! . . .

RAGUENEAU. It is true that for an ode. . .

LIGNIÈRE. You are willing to give at any time a tart!

RAGUENEAU. . . . let. A tart-let.

LIGNIÈRE. Kind soul, he tries to cheapen his charitable acts! And for a triolet were you not known to give . . . ?

RAGUENEAU. Rolls. Just rolls.

LIGNIÈRE (*severely*). Buttered! . . . And the play, you are fond of the play?

RAGUENEAU. It is with me a passion!

LIGNIÈRE. And you settle for your entrance fee with a pastry currency. Come now, among ourselves, what did you have to give to-day for admittance here?

RAGUENEAU. Four custards . . . . eighteen lady-fingers. (*He looks all around*). Monsieur de Cyrano is not here. I wonder at it.

LIGNIÈRE. And why?

RAGUENEAU. Montfleury is billed to play.

LIGNIÈRE. So it is, indeed. That ton of man will to-day entrance us in the part of Phœdo . . . Phœdo! . . . But what is that to Cyrano?

RAGUENEAU. Have you not heard? He interdicted Montfleury, whom he has taken

in aversion, from appearing for one month upon the stage.

LIGNIÈRE (*who is at his fourth glass*). Well ?

RAGUENEAU. Montfleury is billed to play.

CUIGY (*who has drawn near with his companions*). He cannot be prevented.

RAGUENEAU. He cannot ? . . . Well, I am here to see !

FIRST MARQUIS. What is this Cyrano ?

CUIGY. A crack-brain !

SECOND MARQUIS. Of quality ?

CUIGY. Enough for daily uses. He is a cadet in the Guards. (*Pointing out a gentleman who is coming and going about the pit, as if in search of somebody*). But his friend Le Bret can tell you. (*Calling*). Le Bret ! . . . (LE BRET *comes toward them*). You are looking for Bergerac ?

LE BRET. Yes. I am uneasy.

CUIGY. Is it not a fact that he is a most uncommon fellow ?

LE BRET (*affectionately*). The most exquisite being he is that walks beneath the moon !

RAGUENEAU. Poet !

CUIGY. Swordsman !

BRISSAILLE. Physicist !

LE BRET. Musician !

LIGNIÈRE. And what an extraordinary aspect he presents !

RAGUENEAU. I will not go so far as to say that I believe our grave Philippe de Champaigne will leave us a portrait of him ; but, the bizarre, excessive, whimsical fellow that he is would certainly have furnished the late Jacques Callot with a type of madcap fighter for one of his masques. Hat with triple feather, doublet with twice-triple skirt, cloak which his interminable rapier lifts up behind, with pomp, like the insolent tail of a cock ; prouder than all the Artabans that Gascony ever bred, he goes about in his stiff Punchinello ruff, airing a nose. . . . Ah, gentlemen, what a nose is that ! One cannot look upon such a specimen of the nasigera without exclaiming, "No ! truly, the man exaggerates," . . . After that, one smiles, one says : "He will take it off." . . . But Monsieur de Bergerac never takes it off at all.

LE BRET (*shaking his head*). He wears it always . . . and cuts down whoever breathes a syllable in comment.

RAGUENEAU (*proudly*). His blade is half the shears of Fate !

FIRST MARQUIS (*shrugging his shoulders*). He will not come !

RAGUENEAU. He will. I wager you a chicken à la Ragueneau.

FIRST MARQUIS (*laughing*). Very well !

(*Murmur of admiration in the house.* ROXANE *has appeared in her box. She takes a seat in the front, her duenna at the back.* CHRISTIAN, *engaged in paying the sweetmeat vender, does not look.*)

SECOND MARQUIS (*uttering a series of small squeals*). Ah, gentlemen, she is horrifically enticing !

FIRST MARQUIS. A strawberry set in a peach, and smiling !

SECOND MARQUIS. So fresh, that being near her, one might catch cold in his heart !

CHRISTIAN (*looks up, sees* ROXANE, *and, agitated, seizes* LIGNIÈRE *by the arm*). That is she !

LIGNIÈRE (*looking*). Ah, that is she ! . . .

CHRISTIAN. Yes. Tell me at once. . . . Oh, I am afraid ! . . .

LIGNIÈRE (*sipping his wine slowly*). Magdeleine Robin, surnamed Roxane. Subtle. Euphuistic.

CHRISTIAN. Alack-a-day !

LIGNÈIRE. Unmarried. An orphan. A

cousin of Cyrano's . . . the one of whom they were talking.

(*While he is speaking, a richly dressed nobleman, wearing the order of the Holy Ghost on a blue ribbon across his breast, enters* ROXANE'S *box, and, without taking a seat, talks with her a moment.*)

CHRISTIAN (*starting*). That man ? . . .

LIGNIÈRE (*who is beginning to be tipsy, winking*). Hé! Hé! Comte de Guiche. Enamored of her. But married to the niece of Armand de Richelieu. Wishes to manage a match between Roxane and certain sorry lord, one Monsieur de Valvert, vicomte and . . . easy. She does not subscribe to his views, but De Guiche is powerful: he can persecute to some purpose a simple commoner. But I have duly set forth his shady machinations in a song which . . . Ho! he must bear me a grudge! The end was wicked . . . Listen! . . . (*He rises, staggering, and lifting his glass, is about to sing.*)

CHRISTIAN. No. Good-evening.

LIGNIÈRE. You are going ? . . .

CHRISTIAN. To find Monsieur de Valvert.

LIGNIÈRE. Have a care. You are the one who will get killed. (*Indicating* ROX-

ANE *by a glance.*) Stay. Some one is looking . . .

CHRISTIAN. It is true . . .

(*He remains absorbed in the contemplation of* ROXANE. *The pickpockets, seeing his abstracted air, draw nearer to him.*)

LIGNIÈRE. Ah, you are going to stay. Well, I am going. I am thirsty! And I am looked for . . . at all the public-houses! (*Exit unsteadily.*)

LE BRET (*who has made the circuit of the house, returning toward* RAGUENEAU, *in a tone of relief*). Cyrano is not here.

RAGUENEAU. And yet . . .

LE BRET. I will trust to Fortune he has not seen the announcement.

THE AUDIENCE. Begin! Begin!

ONE OF THE MARQUISES (*watching* DE GUICHE, *who comes from* ROXANE'S *box, and crosses the pit, surrounded by obsequious satellites, among whom the* VICOMTE DE VALVERT). Always a court about him, De Guiche!

OTHER MARQUIS. Pf! . . Another Gascon!

FIRST MARQUIS. A Gascon, of the cold and supple sort. That sort succeeds. Believe me, it will be best to offer him our duty.

(*They approach* DE GUICHE.)

SECOND MARQUIS. These admirable ribbons! What color, Comte de Guiche? Should you call it Kiss-me-Sweet or . . . Expiring Fawn?

DE GUICHE. This shade is called Sick Spaniard.

FIRST MARQUIS. Appropriately called, for shortly, thanks to your valor, the Spaniard will be sick indeed, in Flanders!

DE GUICHE. I am going upon the stage. Are you coming? *(He walks toward the stage, followed by all the marquises and men of quality. He turns and calls.)* Valvert, come!

CHRISTIAN *(who has been listening and watching them, starts on hearing that name)*. The vicomte! . . . Ah, in his face . . . in his face I will fling my . . . *(He puts his hand to his pocket and finds the pickpocket's hand. He turns.)* Hein?

PICKPOCKET. Aï!

CHRISTIAN *(without letting him go)*. I was looking for a glove.

PICKPOCKET *(with an abject smile)*. And you found a hand. *(In a different tone, low and rapid.)* Let me go . . . I will tell you a secret.

CHRISTIAN *(without releasing him)*. Well?

PICKPOCKET. Lignière who has just left you . . .

CHRISTIAN (*as above*). Yes ? . . .

PICKPOCKET. Has not an hour to live. A song he made annoyed one of the great, and a hundred men—I am one of them—will be posted to-night . . .

CHRISTIAN. A hundred ? . . By whom ?

PICKPOCKET. Honor . . .

CHRISTIAN (*shrugging his shoulders*). Oh! . . .

PICKPOCKET (*with great dignity*). Among rogues !

CHRISTIAN. Where will they be posted ?

PICKPOCKET. At the Porte de Nesle, on his way home. Inform him.

CHRISTIAN (*letting him go*). But where can I find him ?

PICKPOCKET. Go to all the taverns: the Golden Vat, the Pine-Apple, the Belt and Bosom, the Twin Torches, the Three Funnels, and in each one leave a scrap of writing warning him.

CHRISTIAN. Yes. I will run ! . . . Ah, the blackguards ! A hundred against one ! . . . (*Looks lovingly toward* ROXANE.) Leave her ! . . . (*Furiously, looking toward* VALVERT.) And him ! . . . But Lignière must be prevented. (*Exit running.*)

(De Guiche, *the* Marquises, *all the gentry have disappeared behind the curtain, to place themselves on the stage-seats. The pit is crowded. There is not an empty seat in the boxes or the gallery.*)

The Audience. Begin !

A Burgher (*whose wig goes sailing off at the end of a string held by one of the pages in the upper gallery*). My wig !

Screams of Delight. He is bald ! . . . The pages ! . . . Well done ! . . . Ha, ha, ha ! . . .

The Burgher (*furious, shaking his fist*). Imp of Satan ! . . .

(*Laughter and screams, beginning very loud and decreasing suddenly. Dead silence.*)

Le Bret (*astonished*). This sudden hush ? . . . (*One of the spectators whispers in his ear.*) Ah ? . . .

The Spectator. I have it from a reliable quarter.

Running Murmurs. Hush ! . . . Has he come ? No ! . . . Yes, he has ! . . . In the box with the grating. . . . The cardinal ! . . . the cardinal ! . . . the cardinal ! . . .

One of The Pages. What a shame ! . . . Now we shall have to behave !

(*Knocking on the stage. Complete stillness. Pause.*)

VOICE OF ONE OF THE MARQUISES (*breaking the deep silence, behind the curtain.*) Snuff that candle !

OTHER MARQUIS (*thrusting his head out between the curtains.*) A chair ! (*A chair is passed from hand to hand, above the heads. The marquis takes it and disappears, after kissing his hand repeatedly toward the boxes.*)

A SPECTATOR. Silence !

(*Once more, the three knocks. The curtain opens. Tableau. The marquises seated at the sides, in attitudes of languid haughtiness. The stage-setting is the faint-colored bluish sort usual in a pastoral. Four small crystal candelabra light the stage. The violins play softly.*)

LE BRET (*to* RAGUENEAU, *under breath*). Is Montfleury the first to appear ?

RAGUENEAU (*likewise under breath*). Yes. The opening lines are his.

LE BRET. Cyrano is not here.

RAGUENEAU. I have lost my wager.

LE BRET. Let us be thankful. Let us be thankful.

(*A bagpipe is heard.* MONTFLEURY *appears upon the stage, enormous, in a con-*

ventional shepherd's costume, with a rose-wreathed hat set jauntily on the side of his head, breathing into a be-ribboned bag-pipe.)

THE PIT (*applauding*). Bravo, Montfleury ! Montfleury !

MONTFLEURY (*after bowing, proceeds to play the part of* PHŒDO).

Happy the man who, freed from Fashion's fickle sway,
In exile self-prescribed whiles peaceful hours away;
Who when Zephyrus sighs amid the answering trees. . . .

A VOICE (*from the middle of the pit*). Rogue ! Did I not forbid you for one month ?

(*Consternation. Every one looks around. Murmurs.*)

VARIOUS VOICES. *Hein ?* What ? What is the matter ?

(*Many in the boxes rise to see*).

CUIGY. It is he !

LE BRET (*alarmed*). Cyrano !

THE VOICE. King of the Obese ! Incontinently vanish ! . . .

THE WHOLE AUDIENCE (*indignant.*) Oh ! . . .

MONTFLEURY. But. . .

THE VOICE. You stop to muse upon the matter?

SEVERAL VOICES (*from the pit and the boxes.*) Hush! . . . Enough! . . . Proceed, Montfleury. . . . Fear nothing!

MONTFLEURY (*in an unsteady voice*). Happy the man who freed from Fashion's f——. . .

THE VOICE (*more threatening than before*). How is this? Shall I be constrained, Man of the Monster Belly, to enforce my regulation . . . regularly?

(*An arm holding a cane leaps above the level of the heads.*)

MONTFLEURY (*in a voice growing fainter and fainter*).

Happy the man. . . .

(*The cane is wildly flourished.*)

THE VOICE. Leave the stage!

THE PIT. Oh! . . .

MONTFLEURY (*choking.*)

Happy the man who freed . . .

CYRANO (*appears above the audience, standing upon a chair, his arms folded on his chest, his hat at a combative angle, his moustache on end, his nose terrifying*).

Ah! I shall lose my temper!

(*Sensation at sight of him*).

MONTFLEURY (*to the* MARQUISES). Messieurs, I appeal to you !

ONE OF THE MARQUISES (*languidly*). But go ahead ! . . . Play !

CYRANO. Fat man, if you attempt it, I will dust the paint off you with this !

THE MARQUIS. Enough !

CYRANO. Let every little lordling keep silence in his seat, or I will ruffle his ribbons with my cane !

ALL THE MARQUISES (*rising*). This is too much ! . . . Montfleury. . . .

CYRANO. Let Montfleury go home, or stay, and, having cut his ears off, I will disembowel him !

A VOICE. But . . .

CYRANO. Let him go home, I said !

OTHER VOICE. But after all . . .

CYRANO. It is not yet done ? (*With show of turning up his sleeves.*) Very well, upon that stage, as on a platter trimmed with green, you shall see me carve that mount of brawn. . . .

MONTFLEURY (*calling up his whole dignity*). Monsieur, you cast indignity, in my person, upon the Muse !

CYRANO (*very civilly*). Monsieur, if that lady, with whom you have naught to do, had the pleasure of beholding you . . .

THE VOICE. You stop to muse upon the matter?

SEVERAL VOICES (*from the pit and the boxes.*) Hush! . . . Enough! . . . Proceed, Montfleury. . . . Fear nothing!

MONTFLEURY (*in an unsteady voice*). Happy the man who freed from Fashion's f——. . .

THE VOICE (*more threatening than before*). How is this? Shall I be constrained, Man of the Monster Belly, to enforce my regulation . . . regularly?

(*An arm holding a cane leaps above the level of the heads.*)

MONTFLEURY (*in a voice growing fainter and fainter*).

Happy the man. . . .

(*The cane is wildly flourished.*)

THE VOICE. Leave the stage!

THE PIT. Oh! . . .

MONTFLEURY (*choking.*)

Happy the man who freed . . .

CYRANO (*appears above the audience, standing upon a chair, his arms folded on his chest, his hat at a combative angle, his moustache on end, his nose terrifying*).

Ah! I shall lose my temper!

(*Sensation at sight of him*).

MONTFLEURY (*to the* MARQUISES). Messieurs, I appeal to you !

ONE OF THE MARQUISES (*languidly*). But go ahead ! . . . Play !

CYRANO. Fat man, if you attempt it, I will dust the paint off you with this !

THE MARQUIS. Enough !

CYRANO. Let every little lordling keep silence in his seat, or I will ruffle his ribbons with my cane !

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MONTFLEURY (*calling up his whole dignity*). Monsieur, you cast indignity, in my person, upon the Muse !

CYRANO (*very civilly*). Monsieur, if that lady, with whom you have naught to do, had the pleasure of beholding you . . .

just as you stand, there, like a decorated pot! . . . she could not live, I do protest, but she hurled her buskin at you!

THE PIT. Montfleury! . . . Montfleury! . . . Give us Baro's piece!

CYRANO (*to those shouting around him*). I beg you will show some regard for my scabbard: it is ready to give up the sword! (*The space around him widens.*)

THE CROWD (*backing away*). Hey . . . softly, there!

CYRANO (*to* MONTFLEURY). Go off!

THE CROWD (*closing again, and grumbling*). Oh! . . . Oh!

CYRANO (*turning suddenly*). Has somebody objections? (*The crowd again pushes away from him*)

A VOICE (*at the back, singing.*)

> Monsieur de Cyrano, one sees,
> Inclines to be tyrannical;
> In spite of that tyrannicle
> We shall see La Clorise!

THE WHOLE AUDIENCE (*catching up the tune*). La Clorise! La Clorise!

CYRANO. Let me hear that song again, and I will do you all to death with my stick!

A BURGHER. Samson come back! . . .

CYRANO. Lend me your jaw, good man!

A Lady (*in one of the boxes*). This is unheard of!

A Man. It is scandalous!

A Burgher. It is irritating, to say no more.

A Page. What fun it is!

The Pit. Ksss! . . . Montfleury! . . . Cyrano! . . .

Cyrano. Be still! . . .

The Pit (*in uproar*). Hee-haw! . . . Baaaaah! . . . Bow-wow! . . . Cockadoodledooooooo!

Cyrano. I will . . .

A Page. Meeeow!

Cyrano. I order you to hold your tongues! . . . I dare the floor collectively to utter another sound! . . . I challenge you, one and all! . . . I will take down your names . . . Step forward, budding heroes! Each in his turn. You shall be given numbers. Come, which one of you will open the joust with me? You, monsieur? No! You? No! The first that offers is promised all the mortuary honors due the brave. Let all who wish to die hold up their hands! (*Silence.*) It is modesty that makes you shrink from the sight of my naked sword? Not a name? Not a hand? —Very good. Then I proceed. (*Turning*

toward the stage where MONTFLEURY *is waiting in terror*). As I was saying, it is my wish to see the stage cured of this tumor. Otherwise . . . (*Claps hand to his sword.*) the lancet!

MONTFLEURY. I . . .

CYRANO (*gets down from his chair, and sits in the space that has become vacant around him, with the ease of one at home*). Thrice will I clap my hands, O plenilune! At the third clap . . . eclipse!

THE PIT (*diverted*). Ah! . . .

CYRANO (*clapping his hands*). One! . . .

MONTFLEURY. I . . .

A VOICE (*from one of the boxes*). Do not go' . . .

THE PIT. He will stay! . . . He will go! . . .

MONTFLEURY. Messieurs, I feel . . .

CYRANO. Two! . . .

MONTFLEURY. I feel it will perhaps be wiser . . .

CYRANO. Three! . . .

(MONTFLEURY *disappears, as if through a trap-door. Storm of laughter, hissing, catcalls.*)

THE HOUSE. Hoo! . . . Hoo! . . . Milksop! . . . Come back! . . .

CYRANO (*beaming, leans back in his chair*

and crosses his legs). Let him come back, if he dare!

A Burgher. The spokesman of the company!

(Bellerose *comes forward on the stage and bows*).

The Boxes. Ah, there comes Bellerose!

Bellerose (*with elegant bearing and diction*). Noble ladies and gentlemen . . .

The Pit. No! No! Jodelet! . . . We want Jodelet! . . .

Jodelet (*comes forward, speaks through his nose*). Pack of swine!

The Pit. That is right! . . . Well said! . . . Bravo!

Jodelet. Don't bravo me! . . . The portly tragedian, whose paunch is your delight, felt sick! . . .

The Pit. He is a poltroon! . . .

Jodelet. He was obliged to leave . . .

The Pit. Let him come back!

Some. No!

Others. Yes! . . .

A Youth (*to* Cyrano). But, when all is said, monsieur, what good grounds have you for hating Montfleury?

Cyrano (*amiably, sitting as before*). Young gosling, I have two, whereof each, singly, would be ample. Primo: He is an

execrable actor, who bellows, and with grunts that would disgrace a water-carrier launches the verse that should go forth as if on pinions ! . . . Secundo : is my secret.

THE OLD BURGHER (*behind* CYRANO). But without compunction you deprive us of hearing La Clorise. I am determined . . .

CYRANO (*turning his chair around so as to face the old gentleman ; respectfully*). Venerable mule, old Baro's verses being what they are, I do it without compunction, as you say.

THE PRÉCIEUSES (*in the boxes*). Ha! . . . Ho! . . . Our own Baro! . . . My dear, did you hear that? How can such a thing be said? . . . Ha! . . . Ho! . . .

CYRANO (*turning his chair so as to face the boxes ; gallantly*). Beautiful creatures, do you bloom and shine, be ministers of dreams, your smiles our anodyne. Inspire poets, but poems . . . spare to judge!

BELLEROSE. But the money which must be given back at the door!

CYRANO (*turning his chair to face the stage*). Bellerose, you have said the only intelligent thing that has, as yet, been said! Far from me to wrong by so much as a fringe the worshipful mantle of Thes-

pis. . . . (*He rises and flings a bag upon the stage.*) Catch! . . . and keep quiet!

THE HOUSE (*dazzled*). Ah! . . . Oh! . . .

JODELET (*nimbly picking up the bag, weighing it with his hand*). For such a price, you are authorized, monsieur, to come and stop the performance every day!

THE HOUSE. Hoo! . . . Hoo! . . .

JODELET. Should we be hooted in a body! . .

BELLEROSE. The house must be evacuated!

JODELET. Evacuate it!

(*The audience begins to leave;* CYRANO *looking on with a satisfied air. The crowd, however, becoming interested in the following scene, the exodus is suspended. The women in the boxes who were already standing and had put on their wraps, stop to listen and end by resuming their seats.*)

LE BRET (*to* CYRANO). What you have done . . . is mad!

A BORE. Montfleury! . . . the eminent actor! . . . What a scandal! . . . But the Duc de Candale is his patron! . . . Have you a patron, you?

CYRANO. No!

THE BORE. You have not

CYRANO. No!

THE BORE. What? You are not protected by some great nobleman under the cover of whose name. . . .

CYRANO (*exasperated*). No, I have told you twice. Must I say the same thing thrice? No, I have no protector . . . (*hand on sword*) but this will do.

THE BORE. Then, of course, you will leave town.

CYRANO. That will depend.

THE BORE. But the Duc de Candale has a long arm . . .

CYRANO. Not so long as mine . . . (*pointing to his sword*) pieced out with this!

THE BORE. But you cannot have the presumption . . .

CYRANO. I can, yes.

THE BORE. But . . .

CYRANO. And now, . . . face about!

THE BORE. But . . .

CYRANO. Face about, I say . . . or else, tell me why you are looking at my nose.

THE BORE (*bewildered*). I . . .

CYRANO (*advancing upon him*). In what is it unusual?

THE BORE (*backing*). Your worship is mistaken

CYRANO (*same business as above*). Is it flabby and pendulous, like a proboscis?

THE BORE. I never said . . .

CYRANO. Or hooked like a hawk's beak?

THE BORE. I . . .

CYRANO. Do you discern a mole upon the tip?

THE BORE. But . . .

CYRANO. Or is a fly disporting himself thereon? What is there wonderful about it?

THE BORE. Oh . . .

CYRANO. Is it a freak of nature?

THE BORE. But I had refrained from casting so much as a glance at it!

CYRANO. And why, I pray, should you not look at it?

THE BORE. I had . . .

CYRANO. So it disgusts you?

THE BORE. Sir . . .

CYRANO. Its color strikes you as unwholesome?

THE BORE. Sir. . .

CYRANO. Its shape, unfortunate?

THE BORE. But far from it!

CYRANO. Then wherefore that depreciating air? . . . Perhaps monsieur thinks it a shade too large?

THE BORE. Indeed not. No, indeed.

I think it small . . . small,—I should have said, minute!

CYRANO. What? How? Charge me with such a ridiculous defect? Small, my nose? Ho! . .

THE BORE. Heavens!

CYRANO. Enormous, my nose! . . . Contemptible stutterer, snub-nosed and flat-headed, be it known to you that I am proud, proud of such an appendage! inasmuch as a great nose is properly the index of an affable, kindly, courteous man, witty, liberal, brave, such as I am! and such as you are for evermore precluded from supposing yourself, deplorable rogue! For the inglorious surface my hand encounters above your ruff, is no less devoid—(*Strikes him*).

THE BORE. Aï! aï! . . .

CYRANO. Of pride, alacrity and sweep, of perception and of gift, of heavenly spark, of sumptuousness, to sum up all, of NOSE, than that (*turns him around by the shoulders and suits the action to the word*), which stops my boot below your spine!

THE BORE (*running off*). Help! The watch! . . .

CYRANO. Warning to the idle who might find entertainment in my organ of

smell . . . . And if the facetious fellow be of birth, my custom is, before I let him go, to chasten him, in front, and higher up, with steel, and not with hide!

DE GUICHE (*who has stepped down from the stage with the marquises*). He is becoming tiresome!

VALVERT (*shrugging his shoulders*). It is empty bluster!

DE GUICHE. Will no one take him up?

VALVERT. No one? . . . Wait! I will have one of those shots at him! (*He approaches* CYRANO *who is watching him, and stops in front of him, in an attitude of silly swagger.*) Your . . . your nose is . . . errr . . . Your nose . . . is very large!

CYRANO (*gravely*). Very.

VALVERT (*laughs*). Ha! . . .

CYRANO (*imperturbable*). Is that all?

VALVERT. But . . .

CYRANO. Ah, no, young man, that is not enough! You might have said, dear me, there are a thousand things . . . varying the tone . . . For instance . . . here you are:—Aggressive: "I, monsieur, if I had such a nose, nothing would serve but I must cut it off!" Amicable: "It must be in your way while drinking; you ought

to have a special beaker made!" Descriptive: "It is a crag! . . . a peak! . . . a promontory! . . . A promonotory, did I say? . . . It is a peninsula!" Inquisitive: "What may the office be of that oblong receptacle? Is it an inkhorn or a scissor-case?" Mincing: "Do you so dote on birds, you have, fond as a father, been at pains to fit the little darlings with a roost?" Blunt: "Tell me, monsieur, you, when you smoke, is it possible you blow the vapor through your nose without a neighbor crying "The chimney is afire?" Anxious: "Go with caution, I beseech, lest your head, dragged over by that weight, should drag you over!" Tender: "Have a little sun-shade made for it! It might get freckled!" Learned: "None but the beast, monsieur, mentioned by Aristophanes, the hippocampelephantocamelos, can have borne beneath his forehead so much cartilage and bone!" Off-hand: "What, comrade, is that sort of peg in style? Capital to hang one's hat upon!" Emphatic: "No wind can hope, O lordly nose, to give the whole of you a cold, but the Nor-Wester!" Dramatic: "It is the Red Sea when it bleeds!" Admiring: "What a sign for a perfumer's shop!" Lyrical: "Art thou a Triton, and

is that thy conch?" Simple: "A monument! When is admission free?" Deferent: "Suffer, monsieur, that I should pay you my respects: that is what I call possessing a house of your own!" Rustic: "Hi, boys! Call that a nose? Ye don't gull me! It's either a prize carrot or else a stunted gourd!" Military: "Level against the cavalry!" Practical: "Will you put it up for raffle? Indubitably, sir, it will be the feature of the game!" And finally in parody of weeping Pyramus: "Behold, behold the nose that traitorously destroyed the beauty of its master! and is blushing for the same!"—That, my dear sir, or something not unlike, is what you would have said to me, had you the smallest leaven of letters or of wit; but of wit, O most pitiable of objects made by God, you never had a rudiment, and of letters, you have just those that are needed to spell "fool!"— But, had it been otherwise, and had you been possessed of the fertile fancy requisite to shower upon me, here, in this noble company, that volley of sprightly pleasantries, still should you not have delivered yourself of so much as a quarter of the tenth part of the beginning of the first. . . . For I let off these good things at

myself, and with sufficient zest, but do not suffer another to let them off at me!

De Guiche (*attempting to lead away the amazed vicomte*). Let be, vicomte!

Valvert. That insufferable haughty bearing! . . . A clodhopper without . . . without so much as gloves . . . who goes abroad without points . . . or bow-knots! . . .

Cyrano. My foppery is of the inner man. I do not trick myself out like a popinjay, but I am more fastidious, if I am not so showy. I would not sally forth, by any chance, not washed quite clean of an affront; my conscience foggy about the eye, my honor crumpled, my nicety black-rimmed. I walk with all upon me furbished bright. I plume myself with independence and straightforwardness. It is not a handsome figure, it is my soul, I hold erect as in a brace. I go decked with exploits in place of ribbon bows. I taper to a point my wit like a moustache. And at my passage through the crowd true sayings ring like spurs!

Valvert. But, sir . . .

Cyrano. I am without gloves? . . a mighty matter! I only had one left, of a very ancient pair, and even that became

a burden to me . . . I left it in somebody's face.

VALVERT. Villain, clod-poll, flat-foot, refuse of the earth !

CYRANO (*taking off his hat and bowing as if the* VICOMTE *had been introducing himself*). Ah ? . . . And mine, Cyrano-Savinien-Hercule of Bergerac !

VALVERT (*exasperated*). Buffoon !

CYRANO (*giving a sudden cry, as if seized with a cramp*). Aï ! . . .

VALVERT (*who had started toward the back, turning*). What is he saying now ?

CYRANO (*screwing his face as if in pain*). It must have leave to stir . . . it has a cramp ! It is bad for it to be kept still so long !

VALVERT. What is the matter ?

CYRANO. My rapier prickles like a foot asleep !

VALVERT (*drawing*). So be it !

CYRANO. I shall give you a charming little hurt !

VALVERT (*contemptuous*). A poet !

CYRANO. Yes, a poet, . . . and to such an extent, that while we fence, I will, hop ! extempore, compose you a ballade !

VALVERT. A ballade ?

CYRANO. I fear you do not know what that is.

VALVERT. But . . .

CYRANO (*as if saying a lesson*). The ballade is composed of three stanzas of eight lines each. . .

VALVERT (*stamps with his feet*). Oh! . . .

CYRANO (*continuing*). And an envoi of four.

VALVERT. You . . .

CYRANO. I will with the same breath fight you and compose one. And at the last line, I will hit you.

VALVERT. Indeed you will not!

CYRANO. No? . . . (*Declaiming*).

Ballade of the duel which in Burgundy House
Monsieur de Bergerac fought with a jackanapes.

VALVERT. And what is that, if you please?

CYRANO. That is the title.

THE AUDIENCE (*at the highest pitch of excitement*). Make room! . . . Good sport! . . . Stand aside! . . . Keep still! . . .

(*Tableau. A ring, in the pit, of the interested;* the MARQUISES *and* OFFICERS *scattered among the* BURGHERS *and* COMMON

PEOPLE. *The* PAGES *have climbed on the shoulders of various ones, the better to see. All the women are standing in the boxes. At the right,* DE GUICHE *and his attendant gentlemen. At the left,* LE BRET, RAGUENEAU, CUIGY, *etc.*)

CYRANO (*closing his eyes a second*). Wait. I am settling upon the rhymes. There. I have them. (*In declaiming, he suits the action to the word.*)

Of my broad felt made lighter,
I cast my mantle broad,
And stand, poet and fighter,
To do and to record.
I bow, I draw my sword. . .
En garde ! with steel and wit
I play you at first abord . . .
At the last line, I hit!

(*They begin fencing.*)

You should have been politer;
Where had you best be gored ?
The left side or the right——ah ?
Or next your azure cord ?
Or where the spleen is stored ?
Or in the stomach pit ?
Come we to quick accord . . .
At the last line, I hit!

You falter, you turn whiter?
You do so to afford
Your foe a rhyme in "iter"? . . .
You thrust at me—I ward—
And balance is restored.
Laridon! Look to your spit! . . .
No, you shall not be floored
Before my cue to hit!

(*He announces solemnly.*)

ENVOI.

Prince, call upon the Lord! . . .
I skirmish . . . feint a bit . . .
I lunge! . . . I keep my word!

(*The* VICOMTE *staggers;* CYRANO *bows.*)
At the last line, I hit!

(*Acclamations. Applause from the boxes. Flowers and handkerchiefs are thrown. The* OFFICERS *surround and congratulate* CYRANO. RAGUENEAU *dances with delight.* LE BRET *is tearfully joyous and at the same time highly troubled. The friends of the* VICOMTE *support him off the stage.*)

THE CROWD (*in a long shout*). Ah! . . .
A LIGHT-CAVALRY MAN. Superb!
A WOMAN. Sweet!
RAGUENEAU. Astounding!

A MARQUIS. Novel!

LE BRET. Insensate!

THE CROWD (*pressing around* CYRANO). Congratulations! . . . Well done! . . . Bravo! . . .

A WOMAN'S VOICE. He is a hero!

A MOUSQUETAIRE (*striding swiftly toward* CYRANO, *with outstretched hand*). Monsieur, will you allow me? It was quite, quite excellently done, and I think I know whereof I speak. But, as a fact, I expressed my mind before, by making a huge noise. . . . (*He retires.*)

CYRANO (*to* CUIGY). Who may the gentleman be?

CUIGY. D'Artagnan.

LE BRET (*to* CYRANO, *taking his arm*). Come, I wish to talk with you.

CYRANO. Wait till the crowd has thinned. (*To* BELLEROSE). I may remain?

BELLEROSE (*deferentially*). Why, certainly! . . .

(*Shouts are heard outside.*)

JODELET (*after looking*). They are hooting Montfleury.

BELLEROSE (*solemnly*). *Sic transit!* . . (*In a different tone, to the doorkeeper and the candle snuffer.*) Sweep and close. Leave the lights. We shall come back,

after eating, to rehearse a new farce for to-morrow. (*Exeunt* JODELET *and* BELLEROSE, *after bowing very low to* CYRANO.)

THE DOORKEEPER (*to* CYRANO). Monsieur will not be going to dinner?

CYRANO. I? . . . No.

(*The doorkeeper withdraws.*)

LE BRET (*to* CYRANO). And this, because? . . .

CYRANO (*proudly*). Because . . . (*in a different tone, having seen that the doorkeeper is too far to overhear*). I have not a penny!

LE BRET (*making the motion of flinging a bag*). How is this? The bag of crowns. . . .

CYRANO. Monthly remittance, thou lastedst but a day!

LE BRET. And to keep you the remainder of the month? . . .

CYRANO. Nothing is left!

LE BRET. But then, flinging that bag, what a child's prank!

CYRANO. But what a gesture! . . .

THE SWEETMEAT-VENDER (*coughing behind her little counter*). Hm! . . . (CYRANO *and* LE BRET *turn toward her. She comes timidly forward.*) Monsieur, to know you have not eaten . . . makes my heart ache.

(*Pointing to the sweetmeat-stand.*) I have there all that is needed. . . . (*impulsively*), Help yourself !

CYRANO (*taking off his hat*). Dear child, despite my Gascon pride, which forbids that I should profit at your hand by the most inconsiderable of dainties, I fear too much lest a denial should grieve you : I will accept therefore . . . (*He goes to the stand and selects*). Oh, a trifle ! . . . A grape off this. . . (*She proffers the bunch, he takes a single grape.*) No . . . one ! This glass of water . . . (*She starts to pour wine into it, he stops her.*) No . . . clear ! And half a macaroon. (*He breaks in two the macaroon, and returns half.*)

LE BRET. This comes near being silly !

SWEETMEAT VENDER. Oh, you will take something more ! . . .

CYRANO. Yes. Your hand to kiss. (*He kisses the hand she holds out to him, as if it were that of a princess.*)

SWEETMEAT VENDER. Monsieur, I thank you. (*Curtseys.*) Good evening ! (*Exit.*)

CYRANO (*to* LE BRET). I am listening. (*He establishes himself before the stand, sets the macaroon before him.*) Dinner ! (*does the same with the glass of water*), Drink ! (*and with the grape*). Dessert !

(*He sits down.*) La ! let me begin ! I was as hungry as a wolf ! (*Eating.*) You were saying ?

LE BRET. That if you listen to none but those great boobies and swashbucklers your judgment will become wholly perverted. Inquire, will you, of the sensible, concerning the effect produced to-day by your prowesses.

CYRANO (*finishing his macaroon*). Enormous!

LE BRET. The cardinal . . .

CYRANO (*beaming*). He was there, the cardinal ?

LE BRET. Must have found what you did. . . .

CYRANO. To a degree, original.

LE BRET. Still . . .

CYRANO. He is a poet. It cannot be distasteful to him wholly that one should deal confusion to a fellow-poet's play.

LE BRET. But, seriously, you make too many enemies!

CYRANO (*biting into the grape*). How many, thereabouts, should you think I made to-night ?

LE BRET. Eight and forty. Not mentioning the women.

CYRANO. Come, tell them over!

LE BRET. Montfleury, the old merchant, De Guiche, the Vicomte, Baro, the whole Academy . . .

CYRANO. Enough! You steep me in bliss!

LE BRET. But whither will the road you follow lead you? What can your object be?

CYRANO. I was wandering aimlessly; too many roads were open . . . too many resolves, too complex, allowed of being taken. I took . . .

LE BRET. Which?

CYRANO. By far the simplest of them all. I decided to be, in every matter, always, admirable!

LE BRET (*shrugging his shoulders*). That will do.—But tell me, will you not, the motive—look, the true one!—of your dislike to Montfleury.

CYRANO (*rising*). That old Silenus, who has not seen his knees this many a year, still believes himself a delicate desperate danger to the fair. And as he struts and burrs upon the stage, makes sheep's-eyes at them with his moist frog's-eyes. And I have hated him . . . oh, properly! . . . since the night he was so daring as to cast his glance on her . . . her, who—

Oh, I thought I saw a slug crawl over a flower!

LE BRET (*amazed*). Hey? What? Is it possible? . . .

CYRANO (*with a bitter laugh*). That I should love? (*In a different tone, seriously.*) I love.

LE BRET. And may one know? . . . You never told me. . .

CYRANO. Whom I love? . . . Come, think a little. The dream of being beloved, even by the beautiless, is made, to me, an empty dream indeed by this good nose, my forerunner ever by a quarter of an hour. Hence, whom should I love? . . . It seems superfluous to tell you! . . . I love . . . it was inevitable! . . . the most beautiful that breathes!

LE BRET. The most beautiful? . . .

CYRANO. No less, in the whole world! And the most resplendent, and the most delicate of wit, and among the golden-haired . . . (*with overwhelming despair*) Still the superlative!

LE BRET. Dear me, what is this fair one?

CYRANO. All unawares, a deadly snare, exquisite without concern to be so. A snare of nature's own, a musk-rose, in which ambush Love lies low. Who has

seen her smile remembers the ineffable! There is not a thing so common but she turns it into prettiness; and in the merest nod or beck she can make manifest all the attributes of a goddess. No, Venus! you cannot step into your iridescent shell, nor, Dian, you, walk through the blossoming groves, as she steps into her chair and walks in Paris!

LE BRET. Sapristi! I understand! It is clear!

CYRANO. It is pellucid.

LE BRET. Magdeleine Robin, your cousin?

CYRANO. Yes, Roxane.

LE BRET. But, what could be better? You love her? Tell her so! You covered yourself with glory in her sight a moment since.

CYRANO. Look well at me, dear friend, and tell me how much hope you think can be justly entertained with this protuberance. Oh, I foster no illusions! . . . Sometimes, indeed, yes, in the violet dusk, I yield, even I! to a dreamy mood. I penetrate some garden that lies sweetening the hour. With my poor great devil of a nose I sniff the April. . . . And as I follow with my eyes some woman passing

with some cavalier, I think how dear would I hold having to walk beside me, linked like that, slowly, in the soft moonlight, such a one! I kindle—I forget—and then . . . then suddenly I see the shadow of my profile upon the garden-wall!

LE BRET (*touched.*) My friend . . .

CYRANO. Friend, I experience a bad half hour sometimes, in feeling so unsightly. . . and alone.

LE BRET (*in quick sympathy, taking his hand*). You weep?

CYRANO. Ah, God forbid! That? Never! No, that would be unsightly to excess! That a tear should course the whole length of this nose! Never, so long as I am accountable, shall the divine loveliness of tears be implicated with so much gross ugliness! Mark me well, nothing is so holy as are tears, nothing! and never shall it be that, rousing mirth through me, a single one of them shall seem ridiculous!

LE BRET. Come, do not despond! Love is a lottery.

CYRANO. (*shaking his head*). No! I love Cleopatra: do I resemble Cæsar? I worship Berenice: do I put you in mind of Titus?

LE BRET. But your courage . . . and your wit!—The little girl who but a moment ago bestowed on you that very modest meal, her eyes, you must have seen as much, did not exactly hate you!

CYRANO (*impressed*). That is true!

LE BRET. You see? So, then!—But Roxane herself, in following your duel, went lily-pale.

CYRANO. Lily-pale? . . .

LE BRET. Her mind, her heart as well, are struck with wonder! Be bold, speak to her, in order that she may . . .

CYRANO. Laugh in my face! . . . No, there is but one thing upon earth I fear. . . . It is that.

THE DOORKEEPER (*admitting the* DUENNA *to* CYRANO). Monsieur, you are inquired for.

CYRANO (*seeing the duenna*). Ah, my God! . . . her duenna!

THE DUENNA (*with a great curtsey*). Somebody wishes to know of her valorous cousin where one may, in private, see him.

CYRANO (*upset*). See me?

THE DUENNA (*with curtsey*). See you. There are things for your ear.

CYRANO. There are . . . ?

THE DUENNA (*other curtsey*). Things.

CYRANO (*staggering*). Ah, my God ! . . .

THE DUENNA. Somebody intends, tomorrow, at the earliest roses of the dawn, to hear Mass at Saint Roch.

CYRANO (*upholds himself by leaning on* LE BRET). Ah, my God !

THE DUENNA. That over, where might one step in a moment, have a little talk ?

CYRANO (*losing his senses*). Where? . . . I . . . But . . . Ah, my God!

THE DUENNA. Expedition, if you please.

CYRANO. I am casting about . . .

THE DUENNA. Where ?

CYRANO. At . . . at . . . at Ragueneau's . . . the pastrycook's.

THE DUENNA. He lodges ?

CYRANO. In . . . In Rue . . . Ah, my God ! my God ! . . . St. Honoré.

THE DUENNA (*retiring*). We will be there. Do not fail. At seven.

CYRANO. I will not fail.

(*Exit* DUENNA.)

CYRANO (*falling on* LE BRET'S *neck*). To me . . . from her . . . a meeting!

LE BRET. Well, your gloom is dispelled ?

CYRANO. Ah, to whatever end it may be, she is aware of my existence !

LE BRET. And now you will be calm ?

CYRANO (*beside himself*). Now, I shall be fulminating and frenetical ! I want an army all complete to put to rout! I have ten hearts and twenty arms . . . I cannot now be suited with felling dwarfs to earth. . . . (*At the top of his lungs.*) Giants are what I want !

(*During the last lines, on the stage at the back, shadowy shapes of players have been moving about. The rehearsal has begun: the fiddlers have resumed their places.*)

A VOICE (*from the stage*). Hey ! Psst ! Over there ! A little lower. We are trying to rehearse !

CYRANO (*laughing*). We are going ! (*He goes toward the back.*)

(*Through the street door, enter* CUIGY, BRISSAILLE, *several* OFFICERS *supporting* LIGNIÈRE *in a state of complete intoxication.*)

CUIGY. Cyrano !

CYRANO. What is this ?

CUIGY. A *turdus vinaticus* we are bringing you.

CYRANO (*recognizing him*). Lignière ! Hey, what has happened to you?

CUIGY. He is looking for you.

BRISSAILLE. He cannot go home.

CYRANO. Why?

LIGNIÈRE (*in a thick voice, showing him a bit of crumpled paper.*) This note bids me beware . . . A hundred men against me . . . on account of lampoon. . . . Grave danger threatening me. . . . Porte de Nesle . . . must pass it to get home. Let me come and sleep under your roof.

CYRANO. A hundred, did you say?—You shall sleep at home!

LIGNIÈRE (*frightened*). But . . .

CYRANO (*in a terrible voice, pointing to the lighted lantern which the* DOORKEEPER *stands swinging as he listens to this scene*). Take that lantern (LIGNIÈRE *hurriedly takes it*) and walk! . . . I swear to tuck you in your bed to-night myself. (*To the* OFFICERS.) You, follow at a distance. You may look on!

CUIGY. But a hundred men . . .

CYRANO. Are not one man too many for my mood to-night!

(*The players, in their several costumes, have stepped down from the stage and come nearer.*)

LE BRET. But why take under your especial care . . .

CYRANO. Still Le Bret is not satisfied!

LE BRET. That most commonplace of sots?

CYRANO (*slapping* LIGNIÈRE *on the shoulder*). Because this sot, this cask of muscatel, this hogshead of rosolio, did once upon a time a wholly pretty thing. On leaving Mass, having seen her whom he loved take holy-water, as the rite prescribes, he, whom the sight of water puts to flight, ran to the holy-water bowl, and stooping over, drank it dry. . . .

AN ACTRESS (*in the costume of soubrette*). *Tiens*, that was nice!

CYRANO. Was it not, soubrette?

THE SOUBRETTE (*to the others*). But why are they, a hundred, all against one poor poet?

CYRANO. Let us start! (*To the* OFFICERS.) And you, gentlemen, when you see me attack, whatever you may suppose to be my danger, do not stir to second me!

ANOTHER OF THE ACTRESSES (*jumping from the stage*). Oh, I will not miss seeing this!

CYRANO. Come!

ANOTHER ACTRESS (*likewise jumping from the stage, to an elderly actor*). Cassandre, will you not come?

CYRANO. Come, all of you ! the Doctor, Isabel, Leander, all ! and you shall lend, charming fantastic swarm, an air of Italian farce to the Spanish drama in view. Yes, you shall be a tinkling heard above a roar, like bells about a tambourine !

ALL THE WOMEN (*in great glee*). Bravo ! . . . Hurry ! . . . A mantle ! . . . A hood !

JODELET. Let us go !

CYRANO (*to the fiddlers*). You will favor us with a tune, messieurs the violinists !

(*The fiddlers fall into the train. The lighted candles which furnished the footlights are seized and distributed. The procession becomes a torchlight procession.*)

CYRANO. Bravo ! Officers, beauty in fancy dress, and, twenty steps ahead . . . (*he takes the position he describes*). I, by myself, under the feather stuck, with her own hand, by Glory, in my hat ! Proud as a Scipio trebly Nasica !—It is understood ? Formal interdiction to interfere with me !—We are ready ? One ! Two ! Three ! Doorkeeper, open the door !

(*The* DOORKEEPER *opens wide the folding door. A picturesque corner of Old Paris appears, bathed in moonlight.*)

CYRANO. Ah ! . . . Paris floats in dim nocturnal mist. . . . The sloping blueish

roofs are washed with moonlight. . . . A setting, exquisite indeed, offers itself for the scene about to be enacted. . . . Yonder, under silvery vapor wreathes, like a mysterious magic mirror, glimmers the Seine. . . . And you shall see what you shall see!

ALL. To the Porte de Nesle!

CYRANO (*standing on the threshold*). To the Porte de Nesle! (*Before crossing it, he turns to the* SOUBRETTE.) Were you not asking, mademoiselle, why upon that solitary rhymster a hundred men were set? (*He draws his sword, and tranquilly*). Because it was well known he is a friend of mine! (*Exit.*)

(*To the sound of the violins, by the flickering light of the candles, the procession—* LIGNIÈRE *staggering at the head, the* ACTRESSES *arm in arm with the* OFFICERS, *the players capering behind,—follows out into the night. Curtain.*)

ACT SECOND.

THE COOKSHOP OF POETS.

RAGUENEAU'S *shop, vast kitchen at the corner of Rue St. Honore and Rue de l'Arbre-Sec, which can be seen at the back, through the glass door, gray in the early dawn.*

At the left, in front, a counter overhung by a wrought-iron canopy from which geese, ducks, white peacocks are hanging. In large china jars, tall nosegays composed of the simpler flowers, mainly sunflowers. On the same side, in the middle distance, an enormous fireplace, in front of which, between huge andirons, each of which supports a small iron pot, roasting meats drip into appropriate pans.

At the right, door in the front wing. In the middle distance, a staircase leading to a loft, the interior of which is seen through open shutters; a spread table lighted by a small Flemish candelabrum, shows it to be an eating-room. A wooden gallery con-

tinuing the stairway, suggests other similar rooms to which it may lead.

In the center of the shop, an iron hoop—which can be lowered by means of a rope,—to which large roasts are hooked.

In the shadow, under the stairway, ovens are glowing. Copper molds and saucepans are shining; spits turning, hams swinging, pastry pyramids showing fair. It is the early beginning of the workday. Bustling of hurried scullions, portly cooks and young cook's-assistants; swarming of caps decorated with hen feathers and guinea-fowl wings. Wicker crates and broad sheets of tin are brought in loaded with brioches and tarts.

There are tables covered with meats and cakes; others, surrounded by chairs, await customers. In a corner, a smaller table, littered with papers. At the rise of the curtain, RAGUENEAU *is discovered seated at this table, writing with an inspired air, and counting upon his fingers.*

FIRST PASTRYCOOK (*bringing in a tall molded pudding*). Nougat of fruit!

SECOND PASTRYCOOK (*bringing in the dish he names*). Custard!

THIRD PASTRYCOOK (*bringing in a fowl roasted in its feathers*). Peacock !

FOURTH PASTRYCOOK (*bringing in a tray of cakes*). Mince-pies !

FIFTH PASTRYCOOK (*bringing in a deep earthen dish*). Beef stew !

RAGUENEAU (*laying down his pen, and looking up*). Daybreak already plates with silver the copper pans ! Time, Ragueneau, to smother within thee the singing divinity ! The hour of the lute will come anon—now is that of the ladle ! (*He rises; speaking to one of the cooks.*) You, sir, be so good as to lengthen this gravy,—it is too thick !

THE COOK. How much ?

RAGUENEAU. Three feet. (*Goes further.*)

THE COOK. What does he mean ?

FIRST PASTRYCOOK. Let me have the tart !

SECOND PASTRYCOOK. The dumpling !

RAGUENEAU (*standing before the fireplace*). Spread thy wings, Muse, and fly further, that thy lovely eyes may not be reddened at the sordid kitchen fire ! (*To one of the cooks, pointing at some small loaves of bread.*) You have improperly placed the cleft in those loaves ; the cæsura belongs in the middle,—between

the hemistichs ! (*To another of the* Cooks, *pointing at an unfinished pasty.*) This pastry palace requires a roof ! (*To a young cook's-apprentice, who, seated upon the floor, is putting fowls on a spit.*) And you, on that long spit, arrange, my son, in pleasing alternation, the modest pullet and the splendid turkey-cock,—even as our wise Malherbe alternated of old the greater with the lesser lines, and so with roasted fowls compose a poem !

Another Apprentice (*coming forward with a platter covered by a napkin*). Master, in your honor, see what I have baked. . . . I hope you are pleased with it!

Ragueneau (*ecstatic*). A lyre!

The Apprentice. Of pie-crust !

Ragueneau (*touched*). With candied fruits !

The Apprentice. And the strings, see, —of spun sugar !

Ragueneau (*giving him money*). Go, drink my health ! (*Catching sight of* Lise *who is entering.*) Hush ! My wife ! . . . Move on, and hide that money. (*To* Lise, *showing her the lyre, with a constrained air.*) Fine, is it not ?

Lise. Ridiculous ! (*She sets a pile of wrapping-paper on the counter.*)

RAGUENEAU. Paper bags? Good. Thanks. (*He examines them.*) Heavens! My beloved books! The masterpieces of my friends, — dismembered, — torn! —to fashion paper bags for penny pies!—Ah, the abominable case is re-enacted of Orpheus and the Mænads!

LISE (*drily*). And have I not an unquestionable right to make what use I can of the sole payment ever got from your paltry scribblers of uneven lines?

RAGUENEAU. Pismire! Forbear to insult those divine, melodious crickets!

LISE. Before frequenting that low crew, my friend, you did not use to call me a Mænad,—no, nor yet a pismire!

RAGUENEAU. Put poems to such a use!

LISE. To that use and no other!

RAGUENEAU. If with poems you do this, I should like to know, Madame, what you do with prose!

(*Two children have come into the shop.*)

RAGUENEAU. What can I do for you, little ones?

FIRST CHILD. Three patties.

RAGUENEAU (*waiting on them*). There you are! Beautifully browned, and piping hot.

SECOND CHILD. Please, will you wrap them for us?

RAGUENEAU (*starting, aside*). There goes one of my bags! (*To the children.*) You want them wrapped, do you? (*He takes one of the paper bags, and as he is about to put in the patties, reads.*) "*No otherwise, Ulysses, from Penelope departing. . . .*" Not this one! (*He lays it aside and takes another. At the moment of putting in the patties, he reads.*) "*Phœbus of the aureate locks. . .*" Not that one! (*Same business.*)

LISE (*out of patience*). Well, what are you waiting for?

RAGUENEAU. Here we are. Here we are. Here we are. (*He takes a third bag and resigns himself.*) The sonnet to Phyllis! . . . It is hard, all the same.

LISE. It is lucky you made up your mind. (*Shrugging her shoulders.*) Nicodemus! (*She climbs on a chair and arranges dishes on a sideboard.*)

RAGUENEAU (*taking advantage of her back being turned, calls back the children who had already reached the door*). Psst! . . . Children! Give me back the sonnet to Phyllis, and you shall have six patties instead of three! (*The children give back*

the paper-bag, joyfully take the patties and exeunt. RAGUENEAU *smoothes out the crumpled paper and reads declaiming.*) "*Phyllis*!" . . . Upon that charming name, a grease-spot! . . . "*Phyllis*!" . . .

(*Enter brusquely* CYRANO.)

CYRANO. What time is it?

RAGUENEAU (*bowing with eager deference*). Six o'clock.

CYRANO (*with emotion*). In an hour! (*He comes and goes in the shop.*)

RAGUENEAU (*following him*). Bravo! I too was witness. . . .

CYRANO. Of what?

RAGUENEAU. Your fight.

CYRANO. Which?

RAGUENEAU. At the Hotel de Bourgogne.

CYRANO (*with disdain*). Ah, the duel!

RAGUENEAU (*admiringly*). Yes,—the duel in rhyme.

LISE. He can talk of nothing else.

CYRANO. Let him! . . . It does no harm.

RAGUENEAU (*thrusting with a spit he has seized*). "*At the last line, I hit!*" "*At the last line I hit!*"—How fine that is! (*With growing enthusiasm.*) "*At the last line, I—*

CYRANO. What time, Ragueneau?

RAGUENEAU (*remaining fixed in the attitude of thrusting, while he looks at the clock*). Five minutes past six.—"*I hit!*" (*He recovers from his duelling posture.*) Oh, to be able to make a ballade!

LISE (*to* CYRANO, *who in passing her counter has absentmindedly shaken hands with her*). What ails your hand?

CYRANO. Nothing. A scratch.

RAGUENEAU. You have been exposed to some danger?

CYRANO. None whatever.

LISE (*shaking her finger at him*). I fear that is a fib!

CYRANO. From the swelling of my nose? The fib in that case must have been good-sized. . . . (*In a different tone.*) I am expecting some one. You will leave us alone in here.

RAGUENEAU. But how can I contrive it? My poets shortly will be coming . . .

LISE (*ironically*). For breakfast!

CYRANO. When I sign to you, you will clear the place of them.—What time is it?

RAGUENEAU. It is ten minutes past six.

CYRANO (*seating himself nervously at* RAGUENEAU'S *table and helping himself to paper*). A pen?

RAGUENEAU (*taking one from behind his ear, and offering it*). A swan's quill.

A MOUSQUETAIRE (*with enormous moustachios, enters; in a stentorian voice*). Good-morning!

(LISE *goes hurriedly to him, toward the back.*)

CYRANO (*turning*). What is it?

RAGUENEAU. A friend of my wife's,—a warrior,—terrible, from his own report.

CYRANO (*taking up the pen again, and waving* RAGUENEAU *away*). Hush! . . . (*To himself.*) Write to her, . . . fold the letter, . . . hand it to her, . . . and make my escape. . . . (*Throwing down the pen.*) Coward! . . . . But may I perish if I have the courage to speak to her, . . . to say a single word. . . . (*To* RAGUENEAU.) What time is it?

RAGUENEAU. A quarter past six.

CYRANO (*beating his breast*). A single word of all I carry here! . . . Whereas in writing. . . (*He takes up the pen again.*) Come, let us write it then, in very deed, the love-letter I have written in thought so many times, I have but to lay my soul beside my paper, and copy!

(*He writes.*)

(*Beyond the glass-door, shadowy lank*

hesitating shabby forms are seen moving. Enter the poets, clad in black, with hanging hose, sadly mudsplashed.)

LISE (*coming forward, to* RAGUENEAU). Here they come, your scarecrows!

FIRST POET (*entering, to* RAGUENEAU). Brother in art! . . .

SECOND POET (*shaking both* RAGUENEAU'S *hands*). Dear fellow-bard. . . .

THIRD POET. Eagle of pastrycooks, (*sniffs the air*), your eyrie smells divine!

FOURTH POET. Phœbus turned baker!

FIFTH POET. Apollo master-cook!

RAGUENEAU (*surrounded, embraced, shaken by the hand*). How at his ease a man feels at once with them!

FIRST POET. The reason we are late, is the crowd at the Porte de Nesle!

SECOND POET. Eight ugly ruffians, ripped open with the sword, lie weltering on the pavement.

CYRANO (*raising his head a second*). Eight? I thought there were only seven. (*Goes on with his letter.*)

RAGUENEAU (*to* CYRANO). Do you happen to know who is the hero of this event?

CYRANO (*negligently*). I? . . . No.

LISE (*to the* MOUSQUETAIRE). Do you?

THE MOUSQUETAIRE (*turning up the ends of his moustache*). Possibly!

CYRANO (*writing; from time to time he is heard murmuring a word or two,*) . . . "I love you . . . "

FIRST POET. A single man, we were told, put a whole gang to flight!

SECOND POET. Oh, it was a rare sight! The ground was littered with pikes, and cudgels. . .

CYRANO (*writing*). . . "*Your eyes. . .*"

THIRD POET. Hats were strewn as far as the Goldsmiths' square!

FIRST POET. Sapristi! He must have been a madman of mettle. . . .

CYRANO (*as above*). "*. . . your lips . . .*"

FIRST POET. An infuriate giant, the doer of that deed!

CYRANO (*same business*). "*. . . but when I see you, I come near to swooning with a tender dread . . .*"

SECOND POET (*snapping up a tart*). What have you lately written, Ragueneau

CYRANO (*same business*). "*. . . who loves you devotedly . . .*" (*In the act of signing the letter, he stops, rises, and tucks it inside his doublet.*) No need to sign it, I deliver it myself.

RAGUENEAU (*to* SECOND POET). I have rhymed a recipe.

THIRD POET (*establishing himself beside a tray of cream puffs*). Let us hear this recipe!

FOURTH POET (*examining a brioche of which he has possessed himself*). It should not wear its cap so saucily on one side . . . it scarcely looks well! . . . (*Bites off the top.*)

FIRST POET. See, the spice-cake there, ogling a susceptible poet with eyes of almond under citron brows! . . . (*He takes the spice cake.*)

SECOND POET. We are listening!

THIRD POET (*slightly squeezing a cream puff between his fingers*). This puff creams at the mouth. . . . I water!

SECOND POET (*taking a bite out of the large pastry lyre*). For once the Lyre will have filled my stomach!

RAGUENEAU (*who has made ready to recite, has coughed, adjusted his cap, struck an attitude*). A recipe in rhyme!

SECOND POET (*to* FIRST POET, *nudging him*). Is it breakfast, with you?

FIRST POET (*to* SECOND POET). And with you, is it dinner?

RAGUENEAU. *How Almond Cheese-Cakes should be made.*

Briskly beat to lightness due,
Eggs, a few;
With the eggs so beaten, beat—
Nicely strained for this same use,—
Lemon-juice,
Adding milk of almonds, sweet.

With fine pastry dough, rolled flat,
After that,
Line each little scallopped mold;
Round the sides, light-fingered, spread
Marmalade;
Pour the liquid eggy gold,

Into each delicious pit;
Prison it
In the oven,—and, bye and bye,
Almond cheesecakes will in gay
Blond array
Bless your nostril and your eye!

THE POETS (*their mouths full*). Exquisite! . . . Delicious!

ONE OF THE POETS (*choking*). Humph!

(*They go toward the back, eating.* CYRANO, *who has been watching them, approaches* RAGUENEAU.)

CYRANO. While you recite your works to them, have you a notion how they stuff?

RAGUENEAU (*low, with a smile*). Yes, I see them . . . without looking, lest they should be abashed. I get a double pleasure thus from saying my verses over: I satisfy a harmless weakness of which I stand convicted, at the same time as giving those who have not fed a needed chance to feed!

CYRANO (*slapping him on the shoulder*). You, . . . I like you! (RAGUENEAU *joins his friends.* CYRANO *looks after him; then, somewhat sharply.*) Hey, Lise! (LISE, *absorbed in tender conversation with the* MOUSQUETAIRE, *starts and comes forward toward* CYRANO.) Is that captain . . . laying siege to you?

LISE (*offended*). My eyes, sir, have ever held in respect those who meant hurt to my character. . . .

CYRANO. For eyes so resolute . . . I thought yours looked a little languishing!

LISE (*choking with anger*). But . . .

CYRANO (*bluntly*). I like your husband. Wherefore, Madame Lise, I say he shall not be sc . . . horned!

LISE. But . . .

CYRANO (*raising his voice so as to be heard*

by the MOUSQUETAIRE). A word to the wise! (*He bows to the* MOUSQUETAIRE, *and after looking at the clock, goes to the door at the back and stands in watch.*)

LISE (*to the* MOUSQUETAIRE, *who has simply returned* CYRANO'S *bow*). Really . . . I am astonished at you . . . . Defy him . . . to his face!

THE MOUSQUETAIRE. To his face, indeed! . . . to his face! . . . (*He quickly moves off.* LISE *follows him.*)

CYRANO (*from the door at the back, signalling to* RAGUENEAU *that he should clear the room*). Pst! . . .

RAGUENEAU (*urging the* POETS *toward the door at the right*). We shall be much more comfortable in there. . . .

CYRANO (*impatiently*). Pst! . . . Pst! . . .

RAGUENEAU (*driving along the* POETS). I want to read you a little thing of mine. . . .

FIRST POET (*despairingly, his mouth full*). But the provisions. . . .

SECOND POET. Shall not be parted from us!

(*They follow* RAGUENEAU *in procession, after making a raid on the eatables.*)

CYRANO. If I feel that there is so much as a glimmer of hope . . . I will out with my letter! . . . .

(ROXANE, *masked, appears behind the glass door, followed by the* DUENNA.)

CYRANO (*instantly opening the door*). Welcome! (*Approaching the* DUENNA.) Madame, a word with you!

THE DUENNA. A dozen.

CYRANO. Are you fond of sweets?

THE DUENNA. To the point of indigestion!

CYRANO (*snatching some paper bags off the counter*). Good. Here are two sonnets of Benserade's. . .

THE DUENNA. Pooh!

CYRANO. Which I fill for you with grated almond drops.

THE DUENNA (*with a different expression*). Ha!

CYRANO. Do you look with favor upon the cate they call a trifle?

THE DUENNA. I affect it out of measure, when it has whipped cream inside.

CYRANO. Six shall be yours, thrown in with a poem by Saint-Amant. And in these verses of Chapelain I place this wedge of fruit-cake, light by the side of them. . . . Oh! And do you like tarts . . . little jam ones . . . fresh?

THE DUENNA. I dream of them at night!

CYRANO (*loading her arms with cram-*

med paper bags). Do me the favor to go and eat these in the street.

THE DUENNA. But . . .

CYRANO (*pushing her out*). And do not come back till you have finished! (*He closes the door upon her, comes forward toward* ROXANE, *and stands, bareheaded, at a respectful distance.*) Blessed forevermore among all hours the hour in which, remembering that so lowly a being still draws breath, you were so gracious as to come to tell me . . . to tell me? . . .

ROXANE (*who has removed her mask*). First of all, that I thank you. For that churl, that coxcomb yesterday, whom you taught manners with your sword, is the one whom a great nobleman, who fancies himself in love with me. . . .

CYRANO. De Guiche?

ROXANE (*dropping her eyes*). Has tried to force upon me as a husband.

CYRANO. Honorary? (*Bowing.*) It appears, then, that I fought, and I am glad of it, not for my graceless nose, but your thrice-beautiful eyes.

ROXANE. Further than that . . . I wished . . . But, before I can make the confession I have in mind to make, I must find in you once more the . . . almost

brother, with whom as a child I used to play, in the park—do you remember?—by the lake!

CYRANO. I have not forgotten. Yes . . . you came every summer to Bergerac.

ROXANE. You used to fashion lances out of reeds. . .

CYRANO. The silk of the tasselled corn furnished hair for your doll . . .

ROXANE. It was the time of long delightful games . . .

CYRANO. And somewhat sour berries . . .

ROXANE. The time when you did everything I bade you!

CYRANO. Roxane, wearing short frocks, was known as Magdeleine.

ROXANE. Was I pretty in those days?

CYRANO. You were not ill-looking.

ROXANE. Sometimes, in your venturesome climbings you used to hurt yourself. You would come running to me, your hand bleeding. And, playing at being your mamma, I would harden my voice and say . . . (*She takes his hand.*) "Will you never keep out of mischief?" (*She stops short, amazed.*) Oh, it is too much! Here you have done it again! (CYRANO *tries to draw back his hand.*) No! Let me look at it! . . . Aren't you ashamed?

A great boy like you! . . . How did this happen, and where?

CYRANO. Oh, fun . . . near the Porte de Nesle.

ROXANE (*sitting down at a table and dipping her handkerchief into a glass of water*). Let me have it.

CYRANO (*sitting down too*). So prettily, so cheeringly maternal!

ROXANE. And tell me, while I wash this naughty blood away . . . with how many were you fighting?

CYRANO. Oh, not quite a hundred.

ROXANE. Tell me about it.

CYRANO. No. What does it matter? You tell me, you . . . what you were going to tell me before, and did not dare . . .

ROXANE (*without releasing his hand*). I do dare, now. I have breathed in courage with the perfume of the past. Oh, yes, now I dare. Here it is. There is someone whom I love.

CYRANO. Ah! . . .

ROXANE. Oh, he does not know it.

CYRANO. Ah! . . .

ROXANE. As yet. . . .

CYRANO. Ah! . . .

ROXANE. But if he does not know it, he soon will.

CYRANO. Ah ! . . .

ROXANE. A poor boy who until now has loved me timidly, from a distance, without daring to speak. . . .

CYRANO. Ah ! . . .

ROXANE. No, leave me your hand. It is hot, this will cool it. . . But I have read his heart in his face.

CYRANO. Ah ! . . .

ROXANE (*completing the bandaging of his hand with her small pocket-handkerchief*). And, cousin, is it not a strange coincidence —that he should serve exactly in your regiment!

CYRANO. Ah ! . . .

ROXANE (*laughing*). Yes. He is a cadet, in the same company !

CYRANO. Ah! . . .

ROXANE. He bears plain on his forehead the stamp of wit, of genius! He is proud, noble, young, brave, handsome. . . .

CYRANO (*rising, pale*). Handsome ! . . .

ROXANE. What . . . what is the matter ?

CYRANO. With me? . . . Nothing! . . . It is . . . it is . . . (*Showing his hand, smiling.*) You know! . . . It smarts a little . . .

ROXANE. In short, I love him. I must

tell you, however, that I have never seen him save at the play.

CYRANO. Then you have never spoken to each other?

ROXANE. Only with our eyes.

CYRANO. But, then . . . how can you know? . . .

ROXANE. Oh, under the lindens of Place Royale, people will talk. A trustworthy gossip told me many things!

CYRANO. A cadet, did you say?

ROXANE. A cadet, in your company.

CYRANO. His name?

ROXANE. Baron Christian de Neuvillette.

CYRANO. What? He is not in the cadets.

ROXANE. He is! He certainly is, since morning. Captain Carbon de Castel-Jaloux.

CYRANO. And quickly, quickly, she throws away her heart! . . . But my poor little girl . . .

THE DUENNA (*opening the door at the back*). Monsieur de Bergerac, I have eaten them, every one!

CYRANO. Now read the poetry printed upon the bags! (*The* DUENNA *disappears*). My poor child, you who can endure none but the choicest language, who savor elo-

quence and wit, . . . if he should be a barbarian!

ROXANE. No! no! . . . He has hair like one of D'Urfé's heroes!

CYRANO. If he had on proof as homely a wit as he has pretty hair!

ROXANE. No! No! . . . I can see at a single glance, his utterances are fine, pointed . . .

CYRANO. Ah, yes! A man's utterances are invariably like his moustache! . . . Still, if he *were* a ninny? . . .

ROXANE (*stamping with her foot*). I should die, there!

CYRANO (*after a time*). You bade me come here that you might tell me this? I scarcely see the appropriateness, Madame.

ROXANE. Ah, it was because someone yesterday let death into my soul by telling me that in your company you are all Gascons, . . . all!

CYRANO. And that we pick a quarrel with every impudent fledgling, not Gascon, admitted by favor to our thoroughbred Gascon ranks? That is what you heard?

ROXANE. Yes, and you can imagine how distracted I am for him!

CYRANO (*in his teeth*). You well may be!

ROXANE. But I thought, yesterday, when you towered up, great and invincible, giving his due to that miscreant, standing your ground against those caitiffs, I thought "Were he but willing, he of whom all are in awe . . ."

CYRANO. Very well, I will protect your little baron.

ROXANE. Ah, you will . . . you will protect him for me? . . . I have always felt for you the tenderest regard!

CYRANO. Yes, yes.

ROXANE. You will be his friend?

CYRANO. I will!

ROXANE. And never shall he have to fight a duel?

CYRANO. I swear it.

ROXANE. Oh, I quite love you! . . . Now I must go. (*She hurriedly resumes her mask, throws a veil over her head; says absentmindedly*). But you have not yet told me about last night's encounter. It must have been amazing! . . . Tell him to write to me. (*She kisses her hand to him.*) I love you dearly!

CYRANO. Yes, yes.

ROXANE. A hundred men against you? . . . Well, adieu. We are fast friends.

CYRANO. Yes, yes.

ROXANE. Tell him to write me! . . . A hundred men! You shall tell me another time. I must not linger now . . . A hundred men! What a heroic thing to do!

CYRANO (*bowing*). Oh, I have done better since!

(*Exit* ROXANE. CYRANO *stands motionless, staring at the ground. Silence. The door at the right opens.* RAGUENEAU *thrusts in his head.*)

RAGNENEAU. May we come back?

CYRANO (*without moving*). Yes. . .

(RAGUENEAU *beckons, his friends come in again. At the same time, in the doorway at the back, appears* CARBON DE CASTEL-JALOUX, *costume of a Captain of the Guards. On seeing* CYRANO, *he gesticulates exaggeratedly by way of signal to someone out of sight*).

CARBON DE CASTEL-JALOUX. He is here!

CYRANO (*looking up*). Captain!

CARBON DE CASTEL-JALOUX (*exultant*). Hero! We know all! . . . About thirty of my cadets are out there! . . .

CYRANO (*drawing back*). But . . .

CARBON DE CASTEL-JALOUX (*trying to lead him off*). Come! . . . You are in request!

CYRANO. No!

CARBON DE CASTEL-JALOUX. They are drinking across the way, at the Cross of the Hilt.

CYRANO. I . . .

CARBON DE CASTEL-JALOUX (*going to the door and shouting toward the street corner, in a voice of thunder*). The hero refuses. He is not in the humor!

A VOICE (*outside*). Ah, *sandious!* . . .

(*Tumult outside, noise of clanking swords and of boots drawing nearer.*)

CARBON DE CASTEL-JALOUX (*rubbing his hands*). Here they come, across the street. . . .

THE CADETS (*entering the cookshop*). *Mille dious! . . . Capdedious! . . . Mordious! . . . Pocapdedious! . . .*

RAGUENEAU (*backing in alarm*). Messieurs, are you all natives of Gascony?

THE CADETS. All!

ONE OF THE CADETS (*to* CYRANO). Bravo!

CYRANO. Baron!

OTHER CADET (*shaking both* CYRANO'S *hands*). Vivat!

CYRANO. Baron!

THIRD CADET. Let me hug you to my heart!

CYRANO. Baron!

SEVERAL GASCONS. Let us hug him!

CYRANO (*not knowing which one to answer*). Baron! . . . baron! . . . your pardon!

RAGUENEAU. Messieurs, are you all barons?

THE CADETS. All!

RAGUENEAU. Are they truly?

FIRST CADET. Our coats of arms piled up would dwindle in the clouds!

LE BRET (*entering, running to* CYRANO). They are looking for you! A crowd, gone mad as March, led by those who were with you last night.

CYRANO (*alarmed*). You never told them where to find me? . . .

LE BRET (*rubbing his hands*). I did.

A BURGHER (*entering, followed by a number of others*). Monsieur, the Marais is coming in a body!

(*The street outside has filled with people. Sedan-chairs, coaches stop before the door.*)

LE BRET (*smiling, low to* CYRANO). And Roxane?

CYRANO (*quickly*). Be quiet!

THE CROWD (*outside.*) Cyrano!

(*A rabble bursts into the cookshop. Confusion. Shouting.*)

RAGUENEAU (*standing upon a table*). My

not been able to swear they had seen the deed performed.

CUIGY. With our own eyes!

LE BRET (*low to* CYRANO, *who wears an abstracted air*). But . . .

CYRANO. Be silent!

LE BRET. You appear to be suffering . . .

CYRANO (*starting, and straightening himself*). Before these people? . . . (*His moustache bristles; he expands his chest.*) I . . . suffering? . . . You shall see!

DE GUICHE (*in whose ear* CUIGY *has been whispering*). But this is by no means the first gallant achievement marking your career. You serve in the madcap Gascon company, do you not?

CYRANO. In the cadets, yes.

ONE OF THE CADETS (*in a great voice*). Among his countrymen!

DE GUICHE (*considering the* GASCONS, *in line behind* CYRANO). Ah, ha!—All these gentlemen then of the formidable aspect, are the famous . . .

CARBON DE CASTEL-JALOUX. Cyrano!

CYRANO. Captain? . . .

CARBON DE CASTEL-JALOUX. My company, I believe, is here in total. Be so obliging as to present it to the Count.

CYRANO (*taking a step toward* DE GUICHE, *and pointing at the* CADETS).

They are the Gascony Cadets
Of Carbon de Castel Jaloux;
Famed fighters, liars, desperates,
They are the Gascony Cadets!
All, better-born than pickpockets,
Talk couchant, rampant, . . . pendent, too!
They are the Gascony Cadets
Of Carbon de Castel-Jaloux!

Cat-whiskered, eyed like falconets,
Wolf-toothed and heron-legged, they hew
The rabble down that snarls and threats . . .
Cat-whiskered, eyed like falconets!
Great pomp of plume hides and offsets
Holes in those hats they wear askew . . .
Cat-whiskered, eyed like falconets,
They drive the snarling mob, and hew!

The mildest of their sobriquets
Are Crack-my-Crown and Run-me-through,
Mad drunk on glory Gascon gets!
These boasters of soft sobriquets
Wherever rapier rapier whets
Are met in punctual rendezvous. . .
The mildest of their sobriquets
Are Crack-my-crown and Run-me-through!

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These boasters of soft sobriquets
Wherever rapier rapier whets
Are met in punctual rendezvous. . .
The mildest of their sobriquets
Are Crack-my-crown and Run-me-through!

They are the Gascony Cadets
That give the jealous spouse his due!
Lean forth, adorable coquettes,
They are the Gascony Cadets,
With plumes and scarfs and aigulets!
The husband gray may well look blue. . .
They are the Gascony Cadets
That give the jealous spouse his due!

DE GUICHE (*nonchalantly seated in an armchair which* RAGUENEAU *has hurriedly brought for him*). A gentleman provides himself to-day, by way of luxury, with a poet. May I look upon you as mine?

CYRANO. No, your lordship, as nobody's.

DE GUICHE. My uncle Richelieu yesterday found your spontaneity diverting. I shall be pleased to be of use to you with him.

LE BRET (*dazzled*). Great God!

DE GUICHE. I cannot think I am wrong in supposing that you have rhymed a tragedy?

LE BRET (*whispering to* CYRANO). My boy, your Agrippina will be played!

DE GUICHE. Take it to him. . . .

CYRANO (*tempted and pleased*). Really . . .

DE GUICHE. He has taste in such

matters. He will no more than, here and there, alter a word, recast a passage. . . .

CYRANO (*whose face has instantly darkened*). Not to be considered, monsieur! My blood runs cold at the thought of a single comma added or suppressed.

DE GUICHE. On the other hand, my dear sir, when a verse finds favor with him, he pays for it handsomely.

CYRANO. He scarcely can pay me as I pay myself, when I have achieved a verse to my liking, by singing it over to myself!

DE GUICHE. You are proud.

CYRANO. You have observed it?

ONE OF THE CADETS (*coming in with a number of disreputable, draggled tattered hats threaded on his sword*). Look, Cyrano! at the remarkable feathered game we secured this morning near the Porte de Nesle! The hats of the fugitives!

CARBON DE CASTEL-JALOUX. *Spoliæ opimæ!*

ALL (*laughing*). Ha! Ha! Ha! . . .

CUIGY. The one who planned that military action, my word! must be proud of it to-day!

BRISSAILLE. Is it known who did it?

DE GUICHE. I!— (*The laughter stops short*). They had instructions to chastise

—a matter one does not attend to in person,—a drunken scribbler. (*Constrained silence.*)

THE CADET (*under breath, to* CYRANO, *indicating the hats*). What can we do with them? They are oily. . . . Make them into a hotch pot?

CYRANO (*taking the sword with the hats, and bowing, as he shakes them off at* DE GUICHE'S *feet*). Monsieur, if you should care to return them to your friends? . . .

DE GUICHE (*rises, and in a curt tone*). My chair and bearers, at once. (*To* CYRANO, *violently.*) As for you, sir . . .

A VOICE (*in the street, shouting*). The chairmen of Monseigneur the Comte de Guiche!

DE GUICHE (*who has recovered control over himself, with a smile*). Have you read Don Quixote?

CYRANO. I have. And at the name of that divine madman, I uncover . . .

DE GUICHE. My advice to you is to ponder. . . .

A CHAIRMAN (*appearing at the back*). The chair is at the door!

DE GUICHE. The chapter of the windmills.

CYRANO (*bowing*). Chapter thirteen.

DE GUICHE. For when a man attacks them, it often happens. . . .

CYRANO. I have attacked, am I to infer, a thing that veers with every wind?

DE GUICHE. That one of their far-reaching canvas arms pitches him down into the mud!

CYRANO. Or up among the stars!

(*Exit* DE GUICHE. *He is seen getting into his chair. The gentlemen withdraw whispering.* LE BRET *goes to the door with them. The crowd leaves. The* CADETS *remain seated at the right and left at tables where food and drink is brought to them).*

CYRANO (*bowing with a derisive air to those who leave without daring to take leave of him*). Gentlemen . . . gentlemen . . . gentlemen. . . .

LE BRET (*coming forward, greatly distressed, lifting his hands to Heaven*). Oh, in what a pretty pair of shoes. . . .

CYRANO. Oh, you! . . . I expect you to grumble!

LE BRET. But yourself, you will agree with me that invariably to cut the throat of opportunity becomes an exaggeration! . . .

CYRANO. Yes. I agree. I do exaggerate.

LE BRET (*triumphant*). You see, you admit it ! . . .

CYRANO. But for the sake of principle, and of example, as well, I think it a good thing to exaggerate as I do !

LE BRET. Could you but leave apart, once in a while, your mousquetaire of a soul, fortune, undoubtedly, fame. . . .

CYRANO. And what should a man do ? Seek some grandee, take him for patron, and like the obscure creeper clasping a tree-trunk, and licking the bark of that which props it up, attain to height by craft instead of strength ? No, I thank you. Dedicate, as they all do, poems to financiers ? Wear motley in the humble hope of seeing the lips of a minister distend for once in a smile not ominous of ill ? No, I thank you. Eat every day a toad ? Be threadbare at the belly with groveling ? Have his skin dirty soonest at the knees ? Practice feats of dorsal elasticity ? No, I thank you. With one hand stroke the goat while with the other he waters the cabbage ? Make gifts of senna that counter-gifts of rhubarb may accrue, and indefatigably swing his censer in some beard ? No, I thank you. Push himself from lap to lap, become a little great man in a great little

circle, propel his ship with madrigals for oars and in his sails the sighs of the elderly ladies? No, I thank you. Get the good editor Sercy to print his verses at proper expense? No, I thank you. Contrive to be nominated Pope in conclaves held by imbeciles in wineshops? No, I thank you. Work to construct a name upon the basis of a sonnet, instead of constructing other sonnets? No, I thank you. Discover talent in tyros, and in them alone? Stand in terror of what gazettes may please to say, and say to himself "At whatever cost, may I figure in the Paris Mercury!" No, I thank you. Calculate, cringe, peak, prefer making a call to a poem,—petition, solicit, apply? No, I thank you! No, I thank you! No, I thank you! But . . . . sing, dream, laugh, loaf, be single, be free, have eyes that look squarely, a voice with a ring; wear, if he chooses, his hat hindside afore; for a yes, for a no, fight a duel or turn a ditty! . . . Work, without concern of fortune or of glory, to accomplish the heart's-desired journey to the moon! Put forth nothing that has not its spring in the very heart, yet, modest, say to himself, "Old man, be satisfied with blossoms, fruits, yea, leaves alone, so they be gathered in your

garden and not another man's!" Then, if it happen that to some small extent he triumph, be obliged to render of the glory, to Cæsar, not one jot, but honestly appropriate it all. In short, scorning to be the parasite, the creeper, if even failing to be the oak, rise, not perchance to a great height, . . . but rise alone!

LE BRET. Alone? Good! but not one against all! How the devil did you contract the mania that possesses you for making enemies, always, everywhere?

CYRANO. By seeing you make friends, and smile to those same flocks of friends with a mouth that takes for model an old purse! I wish not to be troubled to return bows in the street, and I exclaim with glee "An enemy the more!"

LE BRET. This is mental aberration!

CYRANO. I do not dispute it. I am so framed. To displease is my pleasure. I love that one should hate me. Dear friend, if you but knew how much better a man walks under the exciting fire of hostile eyes, and how amused he may become over the spots on his doublet, spattered by Envy and Cowardice! . . . You, the facile friendship wherewith you surround yourself, resembles those wide Italian collars,

loose and easy, with a perforated pattern, in which the neck looks like a woman's. They are more comfortable, but of less high effect; for the brow not held in proud position by any constraint from them, falls to nodding this way and that. . . . But for me every day Hatred starches and flutes the ruff whose stiffness holds the head well in place. Every new enemy is another plait in it, adding compulsion, but adding, as well, a ray: for, similar in every point to the Spanish ruff, Hatred is a bondage, . . . but is a halo, too!

LE BRET (*after a pause, slipping his arm through* CYRANO'S). To the hearing of all be proud and bitter, . . . but to me, below breath, say simply that she does not love you!

CYRANO (*sharply*). Not a word!

(CHRISTIAN *has come in and mingled with the cadets; they ignore him; he has finally gone to a little table by himself, where* LISE *waits on him.*)

ONE OF THE CADETS (*seated at a table at the back, glass in hand*). Hey, Cyrano! (CYRANO *turns toward him*). Your story!

CYRANO. Presently! (*He goes toward the back on* LE BRET'S *arm. They talk low.*)

THE CADET (*rising and coming toward the front*). The account of your fight! It will be the best lesson (*stopping in front of the table at which* CHRISTIAN *is sitting*) for this timorous novice!

CHRISTIAN (*looking up*). . . . Novice?

OTHER CADET. Yes, sickly product of the North!

CHRISTIAN. Sickly?

FIRST CADET (*impressively*). Monsieur de Neuvillette, it is a good deed to warn you that there is a thing no more to be mentioned in our company than rope in the house of the hanged!

CHRISTIAN. And what is it?

OTHER CADET (*in a terrifying voice*). Look at me! (*Three times, darkly, he places his finger upon his nose.*) You have understood?

CHRISTIAN. Ah, it is the . . .

OTHER CADET. Silence! . . . Never must you so much as breathe that word, or . . . (*He points toward* CYRANO *at the back talking with* LE BRET.) You will have him, over there, to deal with!

OTHER CADET (*who while* CHRISTIAN *was turned toward the first, has noiselessly seated himself on the table behind him*). Two persons were lately cut off in their

pride by him for talking through their noses. He thought it personal.

OTHER CADET (*in a cavernous voice, as he rises from under the table where he had slipped on all fours*). Not the remotest allusion, ever, to the fatal cartilage, . . . unless you fancy an early grave!

OTHER CADET. A word will do the business! What did I say? . . . A word? . . . A simple gesture! Make use of your pocket-handkerchief, you will shortly have use for your shroud!

(*Silence. All around* CHRISTIAN *watch him, with folded arms. He rises and goes to* CARBON DE CASTEL-JALOUX, *who, in conversation with an officer, affects to notice nothing*).

CHRISTIAN. Captain!

CARBON (*turning and looking him rather contemptuously up and down*). Monsieur?

CHRISTIAN. What is the proper course for a man when he finds gentlemen of the South too boastful?

CARBON DE CASTEL-JALOUX. He must prove to them that one can be of the North, yet brave. (*He turns his back upon him.*)

CHRISTIAN. I am much obliged.

FIRST CADET (*to* CYRANO). And now, the tale of your adventure!

ALL. Yes, yes, now let us hear !

CYRANO (*coming forward among them*). My adventure ? (*All draw their stools nearer, and sit around him, with craned necks.* CHRISTIAN *sits astride a chair.*) Well, then, I was marching to meet them. The moon up in the skies was shining like a silver watch, when suddenly I know not what careful watch-maker having wrapped it in a cottony cloud, there occurred the blackest imaginable night ; and, the streets being nowise lighted,—*mordious !*—you could see no further than . . .

CHRISTIAN. Your nose.

(*Silence. Everyone slowly gets up ; all look with terror at* CYRANO. *He has stopped short, amazed. Pause.*)

CYRANO. Who is that man ?

ONE OF THE CADETS (*low*). He joined this morning.

CYRANO (*taking a step toward* CHRISTIAN). This morning ?

CARBON DE CASTEL JALOUX (*low*). His name is Baron de Neuvill . . . .

CYRANO (*stopping short*). Ah, very well. . . . (*He turns pale, then red, gives evidence of another impulse to throw himself upon* CHRISTIAN.) I. . . . (*He con-*

quers it, and says in a stifled voice.) Very well. (*He takes up his tale.*) As I was saying . . . (*with a burst of rage.*) *Mordious!* . . . (*He continues in a natural tone*) one could not see in the very least. (*Consternation. All resume their seats, staring at one another.*) And I was walking along, reflecting that for a very insignificant rogue I was probably about to offend some great prince who would bear me a lasting grudge, that, in brief, I was about to thrust my . . .

CHRISTIAN. Nose . . .

(*All get up.* CHRISTIAN *has tilted his chair and is rocking on the hind legs.*)

CYRANO (*choking*). Finger . . . between the tree and the bark; for the aforesaid prince might be of sufficient power to trip me and throw me . . .

CHRISTIAN. On my nose . . .

CYRANO (*wipes the sweat from his brow.*) But, said I, "Gascony forward! Never falter when duty prompts! Forward, Cyrano!" and, saying this, I advance—when suddenly, in the darkness, I barely avoid a blow . . .

CHRISTIAN. Upon the nose . . .

CYRANO. I ward it. . . . and thereupon find myself . . .

CHRISTIAN. Nose to nose . . .

CYRANO (*springing toward him*). *Ventre-Saint-Gris!* . . . (*All the* GASCONS *rush forward, to see;* CYRANO, *on reaching* CHRISTIAN, *controls himself and proceeds*) . . . with a hundred drunken brawlers, smelling . . .

CHRISTIAN. To the nose's limit . . .

CYRANO (*deathly pale, and smiling*) . . . of garlic and of grease. I leap forward, head lowered . . .

CHRISTIAN. Nose to the wind! . . .

CYRANO. And I charge them. I knock two breathless and run a third through the body. One lets off at me: Paf! and I retort . . .

CHRISTIAN. Pif!

CRYANO (*exploding*). Death and damnation! Go,—all of you!

(*All the* CADETS *make for the door.*)

FIRST CADET. The tiger is roused at last!

CYRANO. All! and leave me with this man.

SECOND CADET. *Bigre!* When we see him again, it will be in the shape of mince-meat!

RAGUENEAU. Mince-meat? . . .

OTHER CADET. In one of your pies.

RAGUENEAU. I feel myself grow white and flabby as a table-napkin!

CARBON DE CASTEL-JALOUX. Let us go!

OTHER CADET. Not a smudge of him will be left!

OTHER CADET. What these walls are about to behold gives me gooseflesh to think upon!

OTHER CADET (*closing the door at the right*). Ghastly! . . . Ghastly!

(*All have left, by the back or the sides, a few up the stairway.* CYRANO *and* CHRISTIAN *remain face to face, and look at each other a moment.*)

CYRANO. Embrace me!

CHRISTIAN. Monsieur . . .

CYRANO. Brave fellow.

CHRISTIAN. But what does this . . .

CYRANO. Very brave fellow. I wish you to.

CHRISTIAN. Will you tell me? . . .

CYRANO. Embrace me, I am her brother.

CHRISTIAN. Whose?

CYRANO. Hers!

CHRISTIAN. What do you mean?

CYRANO. Roxane's!

CHRISTIAN (*running to him*). Heavens! You, her brother?

CYRANO. Or the same thing: her first cousin.

CHRISTIAN. And she has . . .

CYRANO. Told me everything!

CHRISTIAN. Does she love me?

CYRANO. Perhaps!

CHRISTIAN (*seizing his hands*). How happy I am, monsieur, to make your acquaintance! . . .

CYRANO. That is what I call a sudden sentiment!

CHRISTIAN. Forgive me! . . .

CYRANO (*looking at him, laying his hand upon his shoulder*). It is true that he is handsome, the rascal!

CHRISTIAN. If you but knew, Monsieur, how greatly I admire you! . . .

CYRANO. But all those noses which you . . .

CHRISTIAN. I take them back!

CYRANO. Roxane expects a letter tonight . . .

CHRISTIAN. Alas!

CYRANO. What is the matter?

CHRISTIAN. I am lost if I cease to be dumb!

CYRANO. How is that?

CHRISTIAN. Alas! I am such a dunce that I could kill myself for shame!

CYRANO. But, no . . . no. . . . You are surely not a dunce, if you believe you are! Besides, you scarcely attacked me like a dunce.

CHRISTIAN. Oh, it is easy to find words in mounting to the assault! Indeed, I own to a certain cheap military readiness, but when I am before women, I have not a word to say. . . . Yet their eyes, when I pass by, express a kindness toward me . . .

CYRANO. And do their hearts not express the same when you stop beside them?

CHRISTIAN. No! . . . for I am of those —I recognize it, and am dismayed!—who do not know how to talk of love.

CYRANO. *Tiens!* . . . It seems to me that if Nature had taken more pains with my shape, I should have been of those who do know how to talk of it.

CHRISTIAN. Oh, to be able to express things gracefully!

CYRANO. Oh, to be a graceful little figure of a passing mousquetaire!

CHRISTIAN. Roxane is a précieuse, . . . there is no chance but that I shall be a disillusion to Roxane!

CYRANO (*looking at* CHRISTIAN). If I had, to express my soul, such an interpreter! . . .

CHRISTIAN (*desperately*). I ought to have eloquence! . . .

CYRANO (*abruptly*). Eloquence I will lend you! . . . And you, to me, shall lend all-conquering physical charm . . . and between us we will compose a hero of romance!

CHRISTIAN. What?

CYRANO. Should you be able to say, as your own, things which I day by day would teach you?

CHRISTIAN. You are suggesting? . . .

CYRANO. Roxane shall not have disillusions! Tell me, shall we win her heart, we two as one? will you submit to feel, transmitted from my leather doublet into your doublet stitched with silk, the soul I wish to share?

CHRISTIAN. But Cyrano! . . .

CYRANO. Christian, will you?

CHRISTIAN. You frighten me!

CYRANO. Since you fear, left to yourself, to chill her heart, will you consent,—and soon it will take fire, I vouch for it!—to contribute your lips to my phrases?

CHRISTIAN. Your eyes shine! . . .

CYRANO. Will you?

CHRISTIAN. What, would it please you so much?

CYRANO (*with rapture*). It would . . . (*Remembering, and confining himself to expressing an artistic pleasure*) . . . amuse me! It is an experiment fit surely to tempt a poet. Will you complete me, and let me in exchange complete you? We will walk side by side: you in full light, I in your shadow. . . . I will be wit to you . . . you, to me, shall be good looks!

CHRISTIAN. But the letter, which should be sent to her without delay? . . . Never shall I be able . . .

CYRANO (*taking from his doublet the letter written in the first part of the act*). The letter? Here it is!

CHRISTIAN. How? . . .

CYRANO. It only wants the address.

CHRISTIAN. I . . .

CYRANO. You can send it without uneasiness. It is a good letter.

CHRISTIAN. You had? . . .

CYRANO. You shall never find us—poets!—without epistles in our pockets to the Chlorises . . . of our imagining! For we are those same that have for mistress a dream blown into the bubble of a name! Take,—you shall convert this feigning into earnest; I was sending forth at random these confessions and laments: you

shall make the wandering birds to settle . . . Take it ! You shall see . . . I was as eloquent as if I had been sincere ! Take, and have done!

CHRISTIAN. But will it not need to be altered in any part ? . . . Written without object, will it fit Roxane ?

CYRANO. Like a glove !

CHRISTIAN. But . . .

CYRANO. Trust to the blindness of love . . . and vanity ! Roxane will never question that it was written for her.

CHRISTIAN. Ah, my friend ! (*He throws himself into* CYRANO'S *arms. They stand embraced.*)

ONE OF THE CADETS (*opening the door a very little*). Nothing more. . . . The stillness of death. . . . I dare not look . . . (*He thrusts in his head.*) What is this ?

ALL THE CADETS (*entering and seeing* CYRANO *and* CHRISTIAN *locked in each others arms*). Ah ! . . . Oh ! . . . .

ONE OF THE CADETS. This passes bounds! (*Consternation*).

THE MOUSQUETAIRE (*impudent*). *Ouais ?*

CARBON DE CASTEL-JALOUX. Our demon is waxen mild as an apostle; smitten upon one nostril, he turns the other also !

THE MOUSQUETAIRE. It is in order now

to speak of his nose, is it? (*Calling* LISE, *with a swaggering air*). Hey, Lise! now listen and look. (*Pointedly sniffing the air.*) Oh, . . . oh, . . . it is surprising! . . . what an odor! (*Going to* CYRANO.) But monsieur must have smelled it, too? Can you tell me what it is, so plain in the air?

CYRANO (*beating him*). Why, sundry blows!

(*Joyful antics of the* CADETS *in beholding* CYRANO *himself again. Curtain.*

ACT THIRD.

ROXANE'S KISS.

A small square in the old Marais. Old-fashioned houses. Narrow streets seen in perspective. At the right, ROXANE'S *house and the wall of her garden, above which spreading tree-tops. Over the house-door, a balcony and window. A bench beside the doorstep.*

The wall is overclambered by ivy, the balcony wreathed with jasmine.

By means of the bench and projecting stones in the wall, the balcony can easily be scaled.

On the opposite side, old house in the same style of architecture, brick and stone, with entrance-door. The door-knocker is swaddled in linen.

At the rise of the curtain, the DUENNA *is seated on the bench. The window on* ROXANE'S *balcony is wide open.*

RAGUENEAU, *in a sort of livery, stands near the* DUENNA *; he is finishing the tale of his misfortunes, drying his eyes.*

RAGUENEAU. And then, she eloped with a mousquetaire ! Ruined, forsaken, I was hanging myself. I had already taken leave of earth, when Monsieur de Bergerac happening along, unhanged me, and proposed me to his cousin as her steward. . .

THE DUENNA. But how did you fall into such disaster ?

RAGUENEAU. Lise was fond of soldiers, I, of poets ! Mars ate up all left over by Apollo. Under those circumstances, you conceive, the pantry soon was bare.

THE DUENNA (*rising and calling toward the open window*). Roxane, are you ready ? . . . They are waiting for us ! . . .

ROXANE'S VOICE (*through the window*). I am putting on my mantle !

THE DUENNA (*to* RAGUENEAU, *pointing at the door opposite*). It is over there, opposite, we are expected. At Clomire's. She holds a meeting in her little place. A disquisition upon the Softer Sentiments is to be read.

RAGUENEAU. Upon the Softer Sentiments ?

THE DUENNA (*coyly*). Yes ! . . . (*Calling toward the window.*) Roxane, you must make haste, or we shall miss the disquisition upon the Softer Sentiments !

ROXANE'S VOICE. I am coming !

(*A sound of string-instruments is heard, drawing nearer.*)

CYRANO'S VOICE (*singing in the wings*). La ! la! la! la! la! . . . .

THE DUENNA (*surprised*). We are to have music ?

CYRANO (*enters followed by two* PAGES *with theorbos*). I tell you it is a demi-semi-quaver ! . . . you demi-semi-noddle !

FIRST PAGE (*ironically*). Monsieur knows then about quavers, semi and demi ?

CYRANO. I know music, as do all Gassendi's disciples !

THE PAGE (*playing and singing*). La ! la !

CYRANO (*snatching the theorbo from him and continuing the musical phrase*). I can carry on the melody. . . . La, la, la, la, . . .

ROXANE (*appearing on the balcony*). It is you ?

CYRANO (*singing upon the tune he is continuing*). I, indeed, who salute your lilies and present my respects to your ro-o-oses ! . . .

ROXANE. I am coming down ! (*She leaves the balcony.*)

THE DUENNA (*pointing at the* PAGES). What is the meaning of these two virtuosi ?

CYRANO. A wager I won, from D'Assoucy. We were disputing upon a question of grammar. Yes ! No ! Yes ! No ! Suddenly pointing at these two tall knaves, expert at clawing strings, by whom he constantly goes attended, he said, "I wager a day long of music !" He lost. Until therefore the next rise of the sun, I shall have dangling after me these archlute players, harmonious witnesses of all I do ! . . . At first I liked it very well, but now it palls a little. (*To the musicians*). Hey ! . . . Go, from me, to Montfleury, and play him a pavane ! . . . *The* PAGES *go toward the back. To the* DUENNA.) I have come to inquire of Roxane, as I do every evening. . . . (*To the* PAGES *who are leaving.*) Play a long time . . . and out of tune! (*To the* DUENNA). . . whether in the friend of her soul she can still detect no fault ?

ROXANE (*coming out of the house*). Ah, how beautiful he is, what wit he has, how deeply I love him!

CYRANO (*smiling*). Christian has so much wit ? . . .

ROXANE. Cousin, more than yourself!

CYRANO. I grant you.

ROXANE. There is not one alive, I truly

believe, more apt at turning those pretty nothings which yet are everything. . . . Sometimes he is of an absent mood, his muse is wool-gathering, then, suddenly, he will say the most enchanting things!

CYRANO (*incredulous*). Come! . . .

ROXANE. Oh, it is too bad! Men are all alike, narrow, narrow: because he is handsome, he cannot possibly be witty!

CYRANO. So he talks of the heart in acceptable fashion?

ROXANE. Talks, cousin, is feeble. . . . He dissertates!

CYRANO. And writes? . . .

ROXANE. Still better! Listen now to this . . . (*Declaiming.*) "*The more of my heart you steal from me, the more heart I have!*" (*Triumphantly to* CYRANO). Well? . . .

CYRANO. Pooh!

ROXANE. And to this: "*Since you have stolen my heart, and since I must suffer, to suffer with send me your own!*"

CYRANO. Now he has too much heart, now he has not enough, . . . just what does he want, in the matter of quantity?

ROXANE. You vex me! You are eaten up with jealousy. . . .

CYRANO (*starting*). *Hein?*

ROXANE. Author's jealousy! And this, could anything be more exquisitely tender? "*Unanimously, believe it, my heart cries out to you, and if kisses could be sent in writing, Love, you should read my letter with your lips.* . . .

CYRANO (*in spite of himself smiling with satisfaction*). Ha! Ha! Those particular lines seem to me . . . ho! . . . ho! . . . (*Remembering himself, disdainfully*) . . . puny, pretty . . .

ROXANE. This, then . . .

CYRANO (*delighted*). You know his letters by heart?

ROXANE. All!

CYRANO. It is flattering, one cannot deny.

ROXANE. In this art of expressing love he is a master!

CYRANO (*modest*). Oh, . . . a master!

ROXANE (*peremptory*). A master!

CYRANO. As you please, then . . . a master!

THE DUENNA (*who had gone toward the back, coming quickly forward*). Monsieur de Guiche! (*To* CYRANO, *pushing him toward the house*). Go in! It is perhaps better that he should not see you here! it might put him on the scent . . .

ROXANE (*to* CYRANO). Yes, of my dear secret! He loves me, he is powerful, . . . he must not find out! He might cut in sunder our loves . . . with an axe!

CYRANO (*going into the house*). Very well, very well.

(DE GUICHE *appears.*)

ROXANE (*to* DE GUICHE, *with a curtsey*). I was leaving the house.

DE GUICHE. I have come to bid you farewell.

ROXANE. You are going away?

DE GUICHE. To war.

ROXANE. Ah!

DE GUICHE. I have my orders. Arras is besieged.

ROXANE. Ah! . . . it is besieged?

DE GUICHE. Yes. . . . I see that my departure does not greatly affect you.

ROXANE. Oh! . . .

DE GUICHE. As for me, I own it wrings my heart. Shall I see you again? . . . When? . . . You know that I am made commander-in-general?

ROXANE (*uninterested*). I congratulate you.

DE GUICHE. Of the Guards.

ROXANE (*starting*). Ah, . . . of the Guards?

DE GUICHE. Among whom your cousin serves, . . . the man of the boasts and tirades. I shall have opportunity in plenty to retaliate upon him down there.

ROXANE (*suffocating*). What? The Guards are going down there?

DE GUICHE. Surely. It is my regiment.

ROXANE (*falls sitting upon the bench; aside*). Christian!

DE GUICHE. What is it troubles you?

ROXANE (*greatly moved*). This departure . . . grieves me mortally. When one cares for a person . . . to know him away at the war!

DE GUICHE (*surprised and charmed*). For the first time you utter a kind and feeling word, when I am leaving!

ROXANE (*in a different tone, fanning herself*). So . . . you are thinking of revenge upon my cousin?

DE GUICHE (*smiling*). You side with him?

ROXANE. No . . . against him.

DE GUICHE. Do you see much of him?

ROXANE. Very little.

DE GUICHE. He is everywhere to be met with one of the cadets . . . (*trying to remember*) that Neu . . . villen . . . viller . . .

ROXANE. A tall man ?

DE GUICHE. Light haired.

ROXANE. Red haired.

DE GUICHE. Good looking.

ROXANE. Pooh !

DE GUICHE. But a fool !

ROXANE. He looks like one. (*In a different tone.*) Your vengeance upon Cyrano is then to place him within reach of shot, which is the thing of all he loves! . . . A miserable vengeance ! . . . I know, I do, what would more seriously concern him !

DE GUICHE. And that is ?

ROXANE. Why . . . that the regiment should march, and leave him behind, with his beloved cadets, arms folded, the whole war through, in Paris ! That is the only way to cast down a man like him. You wish to punish him ? Deprive him of danger.

DE GUICHE. A woman ! A woman ! None but a woman could devise a vengeance of the sort !

ROXANE. His friends will gnaw their fists, and he his very soul, with chagrin at not being under fire ; and you will be abundantly avenged !

DE GUICHE (*coming nearer*). Then you do love me a little ? (ROXANE *smiles.*) I wish

to see in this fact of your espousing my grudge a proof of affection, Roxane . . .

ROXANE. . . . You may !

DE GUICHE (*showing several folded papers*). I have here upon me the orders to be transmitted at once to each of the companies . . . except . . . (*he takes one from among the others.*) This one ! . . . the company of the cadets . . . (*He puts it in his pocket.*) This, I will keep. (*Laughing*). Ah, ah, ah ! Cyrano ! his belligerent humor ! . . . So you sometimes play tricks upon people, you ? . . .

ROXANE. Sometimes.

DE GUICHE (*very near her*). I love you to distraction ! This evening . . . listen, . . . it is true that I must be gone. But to go when I feel that it is a matter for your caring ! Listen ! . . . There is, not far from here, in Rue Orléans, a convent founded by the Capuchins. Father Athanasius. A layman may not enter. But the good fathers . . . I fear no difficulty with them ! They will hide me up their sleeve . . . their sleeve is wide. They are the Capuchins that serve Richelieu at home. Fearing the uncle, they proportionately fear the nephew. I shall be thought to have left. I will come to you masked.

Let me delay by a single day, wayward enchantress!

ROXANE. But if it should transpire . . . your fame . . .

DE GUICHE. Bah!

ROXANE. But . . . the siege . . . Arras! . . .

DE GUICHE. Must wait! Allow me, I beg . . .

ROXANE. No!

DE GUICHE. I beseech!

ROXANE (*tenderly*). No! Love itself bids me forbid you!

DE GUICHE. Ah!

ROXANE. You must go! (*Aside.*) Christian will stay! (*Aloud.*) For my sake, be heroic . . . Antony!

DE GUICHE. Ah, heavenly word upon your lips! . . . Then you love the one who . . .

ROXANE. Who shall have made me tremble for his sake . . .

DE GUICHE (*in a transport of joy*). Ah, I will go! (*He kisses her hand.*) Are you satisfied with me?

ROXANE. My friend, I am.

(*Exit* DE GUICHE).

THE DUENNA (*dropping a mocking curtesy toward his back*). My friend, we are!

ROXANE (*to the* DUENNA). Not a word of what I have done: Cyrano would never forgive me for defrauding him of his war! (*She calls toward the house.*) Cousin! (CYRANO *comes out.*) We are going to Clomire's. (*She indicates the house opposite.*) Alcandre has engaged to speak, and so has Lysimon.

THE DUENNA (*putting her little finger to her ear*). Yes, but my little finger tells me that we shall be too late to hear them!

CYRANO (*to* ROXANE). Of all things do not miss the trained monkeys!

(*They have reached Clomire's door*).

THE DUENNA. See! . . . See! they have muffled the doorknocker! (*To the doorknocker.*) You have been gagged, that your voice should not disturb the beautiful lecture, . . . little brutal disturber! (*She lifts it with infinite care and knocks softly*).

ROXANE (*seeing the door open*). Come! (*From the threshold to* CYRANO.) If Christian should come, as probably he will, say he must wait!

CYRANO (*hurriedly, as she is about to disappear*). Ah! (*She turns.*) Upon what shall you, according to your custom, question him to-day?

ROXANE. Upon . . .

CYRANO (*eagerly*). Upon ? . . .

ROXANE. But you will be silent . . .

CYRANO. As that wall!

ROXANE. Upon nothing! I will say: Forward! Free rein! No curb! Improvise! Talk of love! Be magnificent!

CYRANO (*smiling*). Good.

ROXANE. Hush!

CYRANO. Hush!

ROXANE. Not a word! (*She goes in and closes the door.*)

CYRANO (*bowing, when the door is closed*). A thousand thanks!

(*The door opens again and* ROXANE *looks out*).

ROXANE. He might prepare his speeches . . .

CYRANO. Ah, no! . . . the devil, no!

BOTH (*together*). Hush! . . .

(*The door closes*).

CYRANO (*calling*). Christian! (*Enter* CHRISTIAN.) I know all that we need to. Now make ready your memory. This is your chance to cover yourself with glory. Let us lose no time. Do not look sullen, like that. Quick! Let us go to your lodgings and I will rehearse you . . .

CHRISTIAN. No!

CYRANO. What?

CHRISTIAN. No, I will await Roxane here.

CYRANO. What insanity possesses you? Come quickly and learn . . .

CHRISTIAN. No, I tell you! I am weary of borrowing my letters, my words . . . of playing a part, and living in constant fear. . . . It was very well at first, but now I feel that she loves me. I thank you heartily. I am no longer afraid. I will speak for myself . . .

CYRANO. *Ouais?* . . .

CHRISTIAN. And what tells you that I shall not know how? I am not such an utter blockhead, after all! You shall see! Your lessons have not been altogether wasted. I can shift to speak without your aid! And, that failing, by Heaven! I shall still know enough to take her in my arms! *(Catching sight of* ROXANE *who is coming out from Clomire's.)* She is coming! Cyrano, no, do not leave me! . . .

CYRANO *(bowing to him).* I will not meddle, Monsieur.

(He disappears behind the garden wall).

ROXANE *(coming from* CLOMIRE'S *house with a number of people from whom she is taking leave. Curtseys and farewells.)*

Barthénoide ! . . . Alcandre ! . . . Grémione ! . . .

THE DUENNA (*comically desperate*). We missed the disquisition upon the Softer Sentiments ! (*She goes into* ROXANE'S *house.*)

ROXANE (*still taking leave of this one and that*). Urimédonte ! . . . Good-bye !

(*All bow to* ROXANE, *to one another, separate and go off by the various streets.* ROXANE *sees* CHRISTIAN.)

ROXANE. You are here! (*She goes to him.*) Evening is closing round. . . . Wait! . . . They have all gone. . . . The air is so mild. . . . Not a passer in sight. . . . Let us sit here. . . . Talk ! . . . I will listen.

CHTISTIAN (*sits beside her, on the bench. Silence.*) I love you.

ROXANE (*closing her eyes*). Yes. Talk to me of love.

CHRISTIAN. I love you.

ROXANE. Yes. That is the theme. Play variations upon it.

CHRISTIAN. I love . . .

ROXANE. Variations !

CHRISTIAN. I love you so much . . .

ROXANE. I do not doubt it. What further ? . . .

CHRISTIAN. And further . . I should

be so happy if you loved me! Tell me, Roxane, that you love me . . .

ROXANE (*pouting*). You proffer cider to me when I was hoping for champagne! . . . Now tell me a little *how* you love me?

CHRISTIAN. Why . . . very, very much.

ROXANE. Oh! . . . unravel, disentangle your sentiments!

CHRISTIAN. Your throat! . . . I want to kiss it! . . .

ROXANE. Christian!

CHRISTIAN. I love you! . . .

ROXANE (*attempting to rise*). Again! . . .

CHRISTIAN (*hastily, holding her back*). No, I do not love you! . . .

ROXANE (*sitting down again*). That is fortunate!

CHRISTIAN. I adore you!

ROXANE (*rising and moving away*). Oh! . . .

CHRISTIAN. Yes, . . . love makes me into a fool!

ROXANE (*drily*). And I am displeased at it! as I should be displeased at your no longer being handsome.

CHRISTIAN. But . . .

ROXANE. Go, and rally your routed eloquence!

CHRISTIAN. I . . .

ROXANE. You love me. I have heard it. Good-evening. (*She goes toward the house.*)

CHRISTIAN. No, no, not yet ! . . . I wish to tell you. . .

ROXANE (*pushing open the door to go in*). That you adore me. Yes, I know. No ! No ! Go away ! . . . Go ! . . . Go ! . . .

CHRISTIAN. But I . . .

(*She closes the door in his face.*)

CYRANO (*who has been on the scene a moment, unnoticed*). Unmistakably a success.

CHRISTIAN. Help me !

CYRANO. No, sir, no.

CHRISTIAN. I will go kill myself if I am not taken back into favor at once . . . at once !

CYRANO. And how can I . . . how, the devil ? . . . make you learn on the spot . . .

CHRISTIAN (*seizing him by the arm*). Oh, there ! . . . Look ! . . . See !

(*Light has appeared in the balcony window.*)

CYRANO (*with emotion*). Her window !

CHRISTIAN. Oh, I shall die !

CYRANO. Not so loud !

CHRISTIAN (*in a whisper*). I shall die !

CYRANO. It is a dark night. . . .

CHRISTIAN. Well ?

CYRANO. All may be mended. But you do not deserve. . . . There! stand there, miserable boy! . . . in front of the balcony! I will stand under it and prompt you.

CHRISTIAN. But . . .

CYRANO. Do as I bid you!

THE PAGES (*reappearing at the back, to* CYRANO). Hey!

CYRANO. Hush! (*He signs to them to lower their voices.*)

FIRST PAGE (*in a lower voice*). We have finished serenading Montfleury!

CYRANO (*low, quickly*). Go and stand out of sight. One at this street corner, the other at that; and if any one comes near, play! . . .

SECOND PAGE. What sort of tune, Monsieur the Gassendist?

CYRANO. Merry if it be a woman, mournful if it be a man. (*The pages disappear, one at each street corner. To* CHRISTIAN.) Call her!

CHRISTIAN. Roxane!

CYRANO (*picking up pebbles and throwing them at the window-pane*). Wait! A few pebbles . . .

ROXANE (*opening the window*). Who is calling me?

CHRISTIAN. It is I . . .

ROXANE. Who is . . . I?

CHRISTIAN. Christian!

ROXANE (*disdainfully*). Oh, you!

CHRISTIAN. I wish to speak with you.

CYRANO (*under the balcony, to* CHRISTIAN). Speak low! . . .

ROXANE. No, your conversation is too common. You may go home!

CHRISTIAN. In mercy! . . .

ROXANE. No . . . you do not love me any more!

CHRISTIAN (*whom* CYRANO *is prompting*). You accuse me . . . just Heaven! of loving you no more. . . . when I can love you no more!

ROXANE (*who was about to close her window, stopping*). Ah, that is a little better!

CHRISTIAN (*same business*). To what a . . . size has Love grown in my . . . sigh-rocked soul which the . . . cruel cherub has chosen for his cradle!

ROXANE (*stepping nearer to the edge of the balcony*). That is distinctly better! . . But, since he is so cruel, this Cupid, you were unwise not to smother him in his cradle!

CHRISTIAN (*same business*). I tried to, but, Madame, the . . . attempt was futile.

This . . . new-born Love is . . . a little Hercules . . .

ROXANE. Much, much better!

CHRISTIAN (*same business*). . . . Who found it merest baby-play to . . . strangle the serpents . . . twain, Pride and . . . Mistrust.

ROXANE (*leaning her elbows on the balcony-rail*). Ah, that is very good indeed! . . . But why do you speak so slowly and stintedly? Has your imagination gout in its wings?

CYRANO (*drawing* CHRISTIAN *under the balcony, and taking his place*). Hush! It is becoming too difficult!

ROXANE. To-night your words come falteringly. . . . Why is it?

CYRANO (*talking low like* CHRISTIAN). Because of the dark. They have to grope to find your ear.

ROXANE. My words do not find the same difficulty.

CYRANO. They reach their point at once? Of course they do! That is because I catch them with my heart. My heart, you see, is very large, your ear particularly small. . . . Besides, your words drop . . . that goes quickly; mine have to climb . . . and that takes longer!

ROXANE. They have been climbing more nimbly, however, in the last few minutes.

CYRANO. They are becoming used to this gymnastic feat!

ROXANE. It is true that I am talking with you from a very mountain top!

CYRANO. It is sure that a hard word dropped from such a height upon my heart would shatter it!

ROXANE (*with the motion of leaving*). I will come down.

CYRANO (*quickly*). Do not!

ROXANE (*pointing at the bench at the foot of the balcony*). Then do you get up on the seat! . . .

CYRANO (*drawing away in terror*). No!

ROXANE. How do you mean . . . no?

CYRANO (*with ever-increasing emotion*). Let us profit a little by this chance of talking softly together without seeing each other . . .

ROXANE. Without seeing each other? . . .

CYRANO. Yes, to my mind, delectable! Each guesses at the other, and no more. You discern but the trailing blackness of a mantle, and I a dawn-grey glimmer which is a summer gown. I am a shadow merely, a pearly phantom are you! You can

never know what these moments are to me! If ever I was eloquent . . .

ROXANE. You were!

CYRANO. My words never till now surged from my very heart . . .

ROXANE. And why?

CYRANO. Because, till now, they must strain to reach you through . . .

ROXANE. What?

CYRANO. Why, the bewildering emotion a man feels who sees you, and whom you look upon! . . . But this evening, it seems to me that I am speaking to you for the first time!

ROXANE. It is true that your voice is altogether different.

CYRANO (*coming nearer, feverishly*). Yes, altogether different, because, protected by the dark, I dare at last to be myself. I dare . . . (*He stops, and distractedly.*) What was I saying? . . . I do not know. . . . All this . . . forgive my incoherence! . . . is so delicious . . . is so new to me!

ROXANE. So new? . . .

CYRANO (*in extreme confusion, still trying to mend his expressions*). So new . . . yes, new, to be sincere; the fear of being mocked always constrains my heart . . .

ROXANE. Mocked . . . for what?

CYRANO. Why, . . . for its impulses, its flights ! . . . Yes, my heart always cowers behind the defence of my wit. I set forth to capture a star . . . and then, for dread of laughter, I stop and pick a flower . . . of rhetoric !

ROXANE. That sort of flower has its pleasing points . . .

CYRANO. But yet, to-night, let us scorn it !

ROXANE. Never before had you spoken as you are speaking ! . . .

CYRANO. Ah, if far from Cupid-darts and quivers, we might seek a place of somewhat fresher things ! If instead of drinking, flat sip by sip, from a chiselled golden thimble, drops distilled and dulcified, we might try the sensation of quenching the thirst of our souls by stooping to the level of the great river, and setting our lips to the stream !

ROXANE. But yet, wit . . . fancy . . . delicate conceits. . . .

CYRANO. I gave my fancy leave to frame conceits, before, to make you linger, . . . but now it would be an affront to this balm-breathing night, to Nature and the hour, to talk like characters in a pastoral performed at Court ! . . . Let us give

Heaven leave, looking at us with all its earnest stars, to strip us of disguise and artifice : I fear, . . . oh, fear ! . . . lest in our mistaken alchemy sentiment should be subtilized to evaporation ; lest the life of the heart should waste in these empty pastimes, and the final refinement of the fine be the undoing of the refined !

ROXANE. But yet, wit, . . . aptness, . . . ingenuity . . .

CYRANO. I hate them in love ! Criminal, when one loves, to prolong overmuch that paltry thrust and parry ! The moment, however, comes inevitably,—and I pity those for whom it never comes !—in which, we apprehending the noble depth of the love we harbor, a shallow word hurts us to utter !

ROXANE. If . . . if, then, that moment has come for us two, what words will you say to me ?

CYRANO. All those, all those, all those that come to me ! Not in formal nosegay order, . . . I will throw them you in a wild sheaf ! I love you, choke with love, I love you, dear. . . . My brain reels, I can bear no more, it is too much. . . . Your name is in my heart the golden clapper in a bell ; and as I know no rest, Roxane,

always the heart is shaken, and ever rings your name ! . . . Of you, I remember all, all have I loved ! Last year, one day, the twelfth of May, in going out at morning you changed the fashion of your hair. . . . I have taken the light of your hair for my light, and as having stared too long at the sun, on everything one sees a scarlet wheel, on everything when I come from my chosen light, my dazzled eye sets swimming golden blots ! . . .

ROXANE (*in a voice unsteady with emotion*). Yes . . . this is love . . .

CYRANO. Ah, verily ! The feeling which invades me, terrible and jealous, is love . . . with all its mournful frenzy ! It is love, yet self-forgetting more than the wont of love ! Ah, for your happiness now readily would I give mine, though you should never know it, might I but, from a distance, sometimes, hear the happy laughter bought by my sacrifice ! Every glance of yours breeds in me new strength, new valor ! Are you beginning to understand ? Tell me, do you grasp my love's measure ? Does some little part of my soul make itself felt of you there in the darkness ? . . . Oh, what is happening to me this evening is too sweet, too deeply dear !

I tell you all these things, and you listen to me, you! Not in my least modest hoping did I ever hope so much! I have now only to die! It is because of words of mine that she is trembling among the dusky branches! For you are trembling, like a flower among leaves! Yes, you tremble, . . . for whether you will or no, I have felt the worshipped trembling of your hand all along this thrilled and blissful jasmin-bough! (*He madly kisses the end of a pendant bough.*)

ROXANE. Yes, I tremble . . . and weep . . . and love you . . . and am yours! . . . For you have carried me away . . . away! . . .

CYRANO. Then, let death come! I have moved you, I! . . . There is but one thing more I ask . . .

CHRISTIAN (*under the balcony*). A kiss!

ROXANE (*drawing hastily back*). What?

CYRANO. Oh!

ROXANE. You ask? . . .

CYRANO. Yes . . . I . . . (*To* CHRISTIAN.) You are in too great haste!

CHRISTIAN. Since she is so moved, I must take advantage of it!

CYRANO (*to* ROXANE). I . . . Yes, it is true I asked . . . but, merciful heavens!

. . . I knew at once that I had been too bold.

ROXANE (*a shade disappointed*). You insist no more than so?

CYRANO. Indeed, I insist . . . without insisting! Yes! yes! but your modesty shrinks! . . . I insist, but yet . . . the kiss I begged . . . refuse it me!

CHRISTIAN (*to* CYRANO, *pulling at his mantle*). Why?

CYRANO. Hush, Christian!

ROXANE (*bending over the balcony-rail*). What are you whispering?

CYRANO. Reproaches to myself for having gone too far; I was saying "Hush, Christian!" (*The theorbos are heard playing*). Your pardon! . . . a second! . . . Someone is coming!

(ROXANE *closes the window.* CYRANO *listens to the theorbos, one of which plays a lively, and the other a lugubrious tune*).

CYRANO. A dance? . . . A dirge? . . . What do they mean? Is it a man or a woman? . . . Ah, it is a monk!

(*Enter a* CAPUCHIN MONK, *who goes from house to house, with a lantern, examining the doors.*)

CYRANO (*to* THE CAPUCHIN). What are you looking for, Diogenes?

THE CAPUCHIN. I am looking for the house of Madame . . .

CHRISTIAN. He is in the way !

THE CAPUCHIN. Magdeleine Robin . . .

CYRANO (*pointing up one of the streets*). This way ! . . . Straight ahead . . . go straight ahead . . .

THE CAPUCHIN. I thank you. I will say ten Aves for your peace. (*Exit.*)

CYRANO. My good wishes speed your cowl! (*He comes forward toward* CHRISTIAN.)

CHRISTIAN. Insist upon the kiss! . . .

CYRANO. No, I will not !

CHRISTIAN. Sooner or later . . .

CYRANO. It is true ! It must come, the moment of inebriation when your lips shall imperiously be impelled toward each other, because the one is fledged with youthful gold and the other is so soft a pink ! . . . (*To himself.*) I had rather it should be because . . . (*Sound of the window reopening;* CHRISTIAN *hides under the balcony.*)

ROXANE (*stepping forward on the balcony*). Are you there ? We were speaking of . . . of . . . of a . . .

CYRANO. Kiss. The word is sweet. Why does your fair lip stop at it ? If the

mere word burns it, what will be of the thing itself? Do not make it into a fearful matter, and then fear! Did you not a moment ago insensibly leave playfulness behind and slip without trepidation from a smile to a sigh, from a sigh to a tear? Slip but a little further in the same blessed direction: from a tear to a kiss there is scarcely a dividing shiver!

ROXANE. Say no more!

CYRANO. A kiss! When all is said, what is a kiss? An oath of allegiance taken in closer proximity, a promise more precise, a seal on a confession, a rose-red dot upon the letter i in loving; a secret which elects the mouth for ear; an instant of eternity murmuring like a bee; balmy communion with a flavor of flowers; a fashion of inhaling each other's heart, and of tasting, on the brink of the lips, each other's soul!

ROXANE. Say no more . . . no more!

CYRANO. A kiss, Madame, is a thing so noble that the Queen of France, on the most fortunate of lords, bestowed one, did the queen herself!

ROXANE. If that be so . . .

CYRANO (*with increasing fervor*). Like Buckingham I have suffered in long silence,

like him I worship a queen, like him I am sorrowful and unchanging . . .

ROXANE. Like him you enthrall through the eyes the heart that follows you !

CYRANO (*to himself, sobered*). True, I am handsome . . . I had forgotten !

ROXANE. Come then and gather it, the supreme flower . . .

CYRANO (*pushing* CHRISTIAN *toward the balcony*). Go!

ROXANE. . . . tasting of the heart.

CYRANO. Go ! . . .

ROXANE. . . . murmuring like a bee . . .

CYRANO. Go!

CHRISTIAN (*hesitating*). But now I feel as if I ought not!

ROXANE. . . . making Eternity an instant . . .

CYRANO (*pushing* CHRISTIAN). Scale the balcony, you donkey !

(CHRISTIAN *springs toward the balcony, and climbs by means of the bench, the vine, the posts and balusters*).

CHRISTIAN. Ah, Roxane! (*He clasps her to him, and bends over her lips*).

CYRANO. Ha! . . . What a turn of the screw to my heart ! . . . Kiss, banquet of Love at which I am Lazarus, a crumb drops from your table even to me, here in

the shade. . . . Yes, in my outstretched heart a little falls, as I feel that upon the lip pressing her lip Roxane kisses the words spoken by me! . . . (*The theorbos are heard.*) A merry tune . . . a mournful one . . . The monk! (*He goes through the pretence of arriving on the spot at a run, as if from a distance; calling.*) Ho, there!

ROXANE. What is it?

CYRANO. It is I. I was passing this way. Is Christian there?

CHRISTIAN (*astonished*). Cyrano!

ROXANE. Good-evening, cousin!

CYRANO. Cousin, good-evening!

ROXANE. I will come down.

(ROXANE *disappears in the house.* THE CAPUCHIN *re-enters at the back.*)

CHRISTIAN (*seeing him*). Oh, again! (*He follows* ROXANE.)

THE CAPUCHIN. It is here she lives, I am certain . . . Magdeleine Robin.

CYRANO. You said Ro-lin.

THE CAPUCHIN. No, bin, . . . b, i, n, bin!

ROXANE (*appearing upon the threshold, followed by* RAGUENEAU *carrying a lantern, and* CHRISTIAN). What is it?

THE CAPUCHIN. A letter.

CHRISTIAN. What?

THE CAPUCHIN (*to* ROXANE). Oh, the contents can be only of a sacred character! It is from a worthy nobleman who . . .

ROXANE (*to* CHRISTIAN). It is from De Guiche!

CHRISTIAN. He dares to . . . ?

ROXANE. Oh, he will not trouble me much longer! (*Opening the letter.*) I love you, and if . . . (*By the light of* RAGUENEAU'S *lantern she reads, aside, low.*) Mademoiselle: The drums are beating. My regiment is buckling on its corselet. It is about to leave. I am thought to have left already, but lag behind. I am disobeying you. I am in the convent here. I am coming to you, and send you word by a friar, silly as a sheep, who has no suspicion of the import of this letter. You smiled too sweetly upon me an hour ago: I must see you smile again. Provide to be alone, and deign graciously to receive the audacious worshipper, forgiven already, I can but hope, who signs himself your—etc. . . . (*To* THE CAPUCHIN.) Father, this is what the letter tells me . . . Listen: (*All draw nearer; she reads aloud.*) Mademoiselle: The wishes of the cardinal may not be disregarded, however hard compliance with them prove. I have therefore chosen as

bearer of this letter a most reverend, holy, and sagacious Capuchin ; it is our wish that he should at once, in your own dwelling, pronounce the nuptial blessing over you. Christian must secretly become your husband. I send him to you. You dislike him. Bow to Heaven's will in resignation, and be sure that it will bless your zeal, and sure, likewise, Mademoiselle, of the respect of him who is and will be ever your most humble and . . . etc.

THE CAPUCHIN (*beaming*). The worthy gentleman! . . . I knew it! You remember that I said so: The contents of that letter can be only of a sacred character !

ROXANE (*low, to* CHRISTIAN). I am a fluent reader, am I not ?

CHRISTIAN. Hm !

ROXANE (*with feigned despair*). Ah . . . it is horrible !

THE CAPUCHIN (*who has turned the light of his lantern upon* CYRANO). You are the one ?

CHRISTIAN. No, I am.

THE CAPUCHIN (*turning the light upon him, and as if his good looks aroused suspicion*). But . . .

ROXANE (*quickly*) Postscript : You

will bestow upon the convent two hundred and fifty crowns.

THE CAPUCHIN. The worthy, worthy gentleman! (*To* ROXANE.) Be reconciled!

ROXANE (*with the expression of a martyr*). I will endeavor! (*While* RAGUENEAU *opens the door for* THE CAPUCHIN, *whom* CHRISTIAN *is showing into the house*, ROXANE *says low to* CYRANO.) De Guiche is coming! . . . Keep him here! Do not let him enter until . . .

CYRANO. I understand! (*To* THE CAPUCHIN.) How long will it take to marry them?

THE CAPUCHIN. A quarter of an hour.

CYRANO (*pushing all toward the house*). Go in! I shall be here!

ROXANE (*to* CHRISTIAN). Come!

(*They go in.*)

CYRANO. How can I detain De Guiche for a quarter of an hour? (*He jumps upon the bench, climbs the wall toward the balcony rail.*) So! . . . I climb up here! . . . I know what I will do! . . . (*The theorbos play a melancholy tune.*) Ho, it is a man! (*The tune quavers lugubriously.*) Ho, ho, this time there is no mistake! (*He is on the balcony; he pulls the brim of his hat over his eyes, takes off his sword, wraps*

his cloak about him, and bends over the balcony-rail.) No, it is not too far! (*He climbs over the balcony rail, and reaching for a long bough that projects beyond the garden wall, holds on to it with both hands, ready to let himself drop.*) I shall make a slight commotion in the atmosphere!

De Guiche (*enters masked, groping in the dark*). What can that thrice-damned Capuchin be about?

Cyrano. The devil! if he should recognize my voice? (*Letting go with one hand, he makes show of turning a key.*) Cric! crac! (*Solemnly.*) Cyrano, resume the accent of Bergerac!

De Guiche (*looking at* Roxane's *house*). Yes, that is it. I can scarcely see. This mask bothers my eyes! (*He is about to enter* Roxane's *house;* Cyrano *swings from the balcony, holding on to the bough, which bends and lets him down between the door and* De Guiche. *He intentionally drops very heavily, to give the effect of dropping from a great height, and lies flattened upon the ground, motionless, as if stunned.*)

De Guiche. What is it? (*When he looks up, the bough has swung into place;*

he sees nothing but the sky). Where did this man drop from?

CYRANO (*rising to a sitting posture*). From the moon!

DE GUICHE. From the . . . ?

CYRANO (*in a dreamy voice*). What time is it?

DE GUICHE. Is he mad?

CYRANO. What time? What country? What day? What season?

DE GUICHE. But . . .

CYRANO. I am dazed!

DE GUICHE. Monsieur . . .

CYRANO. I have dropped from the moon like a bomb!

DE GUICHE (*impatiently*). What are you babbling about?

CYRANO (*rising, in a terrible voice*). I tell you I have dropped from the moon!

DE GUICHE (*backing a step*). Very well. You have dropped from the moon! . . He is perhaps a lunatic!

CYRANO (*walking up close to him*). Not metaphorically, mind that!

DE GUICHE. But . . .

CYRANO. A hundred years ago, or else a minute,—for I have no conception how long I have been falling,—I was up there, in that saffron-colored ball!

DE GUICHE (*shrugging his shoulders*). You were. Now, let me pass!

CYRANO (*standing in his way*). Where am I? Be frank with me! Keep nothing from me! In what region, among what people, have I been shot like an aerolite?

DE GUICHE. I wish to pass!

CYRANO. While falling I could not choose my way, and have no notion where I have fallen! Is it upon a moon, or is it upon an earth, I have been dragged by my posterior weight?

DE GUICHE. I tell you, sir . . .

CYRANO (*with a scream of terror at which* DE GUICHE *starts backward a step*). Great God! . . In this country men's faces are soot-black!

DE GUICHE (*lifting his hand to his face*). What does he mean?

CYRANO (*still terrified*). Am I in Algeria? Are you a native? . . .

DE GUICHE (*who has felt his mask*). Ah, my mask!

CYRANO (*pretending to be easier*). So I am in Venice! . . . Or am I in Genoa?

DE GUICHE (*attempting to pass*). A lady is expecting me!

CYRANO (*completely reassured*). Ah, then I am in Paris.

DE GUICHE (*smiling in spite of himself*). The rogue is not far from amusing!

CYRANO. Ah, you are laughing!

DE GUICHE. I laugh . . . but intend to pass!

CYRANO (*beaming*). To think I should strike Paris! (*Quite at his ease, laughing, brushing himself, bowing.*) I arrived—pray, pardon my appearance!—by the last whirlwind. I am rather unpresentable—Travel, you know! My eyes are still full of star-dust. My spurs are clogged with bristles off a planet. (*Appearing to pick something off his sleeve.*) See, on my sleeve, a comet's hair! (*He makes a feint of blowing it away.*)

DE GUICHE (*beside himself*). Sir . . .

CYRANO (*as* DE GUICHE *is about to pass, stretching out his leg as if to show something on it, thereby stopping him.*) Embedded in my calf, I have brought back one of the Great Bear's teeth . . . and as, falling too near the Trident, I strained aside to clear one of its prongs, I landed sitting in Libra, . . . yes, one of the scales! . . . and now my weight is registered up there! (*Quickly preventing* DE GUICHE *from passing, and taking hold of a button on his doublet.*) And if, Monsieur, you should

take my nose between your fingers and compress it . . . milk would result!

DE GUICHE. What are you saying? Milk? . . .

CYRANO. Of the Milky Way.

DE GUICHE. Go to the devil!

CYRANO. No! I am sent from Heaven, literally. (*Folding his arms.*) Will you believe—I discovered it in passing—that Sirius at night puts on a night-cap? (*Confidentially.*) The lesser Bear is too little yet to bite. . . . (*Laughing.*) I tumbled plump through Lyra, and snapped a string! . . . (*Magnificent.*) But I intend setting all this down in a book, and the golden stars I have brought back caught in my shaggy mantle, when the book is printed, will be seen serving as asterisks!

DE GUICHE. I have stood this long enough! I want . . .

CYRANO. I know perfectly what you want!

DE GUICHE. Man . . .

CYRANO. You want to know, from me, at first hand, what the moon is made of, and whether that monumental pumpkin is inhabited?

DE GUICHE (*shouting*). Not in the very least! I want . . .

CYRANO. To know how I got there? I got there by a method of my own invention.

DE GUICHE (*discouraged*). He is mad! . . . stark!

CYRANO (*disdainfully*). Do not imagine that I resorted to anything so absurd as Regiomontanus's eagle, or anything so lacking in enterprise as Archytas's pigeon! . . .

DE GUICHE. The madman is erudite . . .

CYRANO. I drew up nothing that had ever been thought of before! (DE GUICHE *has succeeded in getting past* CYRANO, *and is nearing* ROXANE'S *door;* CYRANO *follows him, ready to buttonhole him.*) I invented no less than six ways of storming the blue fort of Heaven!

DE GUICHE (*turning around*). Six, did you say?

CYRANO (*volubly*). One way was to stand naked in the sunshine, in a harness thickly studded with glass phials, each filled with morning dew. The sun in drawing up the dew, you see, could not have helped drawing me up too!

DE GUICHE (*surprised, taking a step toward* CYRANO). True. That is one!

CYRANO (*taking a step backward, with a view to drawing* DE GUICHE *away from the door*). Or else, I could have let the wind into a cedar coffer, then rarified the imprisoned element by means of cunningly adjusted burning-glasses, and soared up with it!

DE GUICHE (*taking another step toward* CYRANO). Two!

CYRANO (*backing*). Or else, mechanic as well as artificer, I could have fashioned a giant grasshopper, with steel joints, which, impelled by successive explosions of saltpeter, would have hopped with me to the azure meadows where graze the starry flocks!

DE GUICHE (*unconsciously following* CYRANO, *and counting on his fingers*). That makes three!

CYRANO. Since smoke by its nature ascends, I could have blown into an appropriate globe a sufficient quantity to ascend with me!

DE GUICHE (*as above, more and more astonished*). Four!

CYRANO. Since Phœbe, the moon-goddess, when she is at wane, is greedy, O beeves! of your marrow, . . . with that marrow have besmeared myself!

DE GUICHE (*amazed*). Five !

CYRANO (*who while talking has backed, followed by* DE GUICHE, *to the further side of the square, near a bench*). Or else, I could have placed myself upon an iron plate, have taken a magnet of suitable size, and thrown it in the air ! That way is a very good one ! The magnet flies upward, the iron instantly after ; the magnet no sooner overtaken than you fling it up again. . . . The rest is clear ! You can go upward indefinitely.

DE GUICHE. Six ! . . . But here are six excellent methods ! Which of the six, my dear sir, did you select ?

CYRANO. A seventh !

DE GUICHE. Did you, indeed ? And what was that ?

CYRANO. I give you a hundred guesses !

DE GUICHE. I must confess that I should like to know !

CYRANO (*imitating the noise of the surf, and making great mysterious gestures*). Hoo-ish ! hoo-ish !

DE GUICHE. Well ! What is that ?

CYRANO. Cannot you guess ?

DE GUICHE. No !

CYRANO. The tide ! . . . At the hour in which the moon attracts the deep, I lay

down upon the sands, after a sea-bath . . . and, my head being drawn up first,—the reason of this, you see, that the hair will hold a quantity of water in its mop!—I rose in the air, straight, beautifully straight, like an angel. I rose . . . I rose softly . . . without an effort . . . when, suddenly, I felt a shock. Then . . .

DE GUICHE (*lured on by curiosity, taking a seat on the bench*). Well, . . . then?

CYRANO. Then . . . (*resuming his natural voice.*) The time is up, Monsieur, and I release you. They are married.

DE GUICHE (*getting to his feet with a leap*). I am dreaming or drunk! That voice? (*The door of* ROXANE'S *house opens; lackeys appear carrying lighted candelabra.* CYRANO *removes his hat.*) And that nose! . . . Cyrano!

CYRANO (*bowing*). Cyrano. They have exchanged rings within the quarter of the hour.

DE GUICHE. Who have? (*He turns round. Tableau. Behind the lackey stand* ROXANE *and* CHRISTIAN *holding hands.* THE CAPUCHIN *follows them smiling.* RAGUENEAU *holds high a flambeau.* THE DUENNA *closes the procession, bewildered in her*

bedgown.) Heavens! (*to* ROXANE.) You! (*Recognizing* CHRISTIAN *with amazement.*) He? (*Bowing to* ROXANE.) Your astuteness compels my admiration! (*To* CYRANO.) My compliments to you, ingenious inventor of flying machines. Your experiences would have beguiled a saint on the threshold of Paradise! Make a note of them. . . . They can be used again, with profit, in a book!

CYRANO (*bowing*). I will confidently follow your advice.

THE CAPUCHIN (*to* DE GUICHE, *pointing at the lovers, and wagging his great white beard with satisfaction*). A beautiful couple, my son, brought together by you!

DE GUICHE (*eyeing him frigidly*). As you say! (*To* ROXANE.) And now proceed, Madame, to take leave of your husband.

ROXANE. What?

DE GUICHE (*to* CHRISTIAN). The regiment is on the point of starting. You are to join it!

ROXANE. To go to war?

DE GUICHE. Of course!

ROXANE. But the cadets are not going!

DE GUICHE. They are! (*Taking out the paper which he had put in his pocket.*) Here is the order. (*To* CHRISTIAN.) I beg

you will take it to the Captain, baron, yourself.

ROXANE (*throwing herself in* CHRISTIAN'S *arms*). Christian !

DE GUICHE (*to* CYRANO, *with a malignant laugh*). The wedding night is somewhat far as yet !

CYRANO (*aside*). He thinks that he is giving me great pain !

CHRISTIAN (*to* ROXANE). Oh, once more, dear ! . . . Once more !

CYRANO. Be reasonable . . . Come ! . . . Enough !

CHRISTIAN (*still clasping* ROXANE). Oh, it is hard to leave her. . . . You cannot know. . .

CYRANO (*trying to draw him away*). I know.

(*Drums are heard in the distance sounding a march.*)

DE GUICHE (*at the back*). The regiment is on its way !

ROXANE (*to* CYRANO, *while she clings to* CHRISTIAN *whom he is trying to draw away*). Oh ! . . . I entrust him to your care ! Promise that under no circumstance shall his life be placed in danger !

CYRANO. I will endeavor . . . but obviously cannot promise . . .

ROXANE (*same business*). Promise that he will be careful of himself!

CYRANO. I will do my best, but . . .

ROXANE (*as above*). That during this terrible siege he shall not take harm from the cold!

CYRANO. I will try, but . . .

ROXANE (*as above*). That he will be true to me!

CYRANO. Of course, but yet, you see . . .

ROXANE (*as above*). That he will write to me often!

CYRANO (*stopping*). Ah, that . . . I promise freely!

(*Curtain.*)

ACT FOURTH.

THE GASCONY CADETS.

The post occupied at the siege of Arras by the company of CARBON DE CASTEL-JALOUX. *At the back, across the whole stage, sloping earthwork. Beyond this is seen a plain stretching to the horizon; the country is covered with constructions relating to the siege. In the distance, against the sky, the outlines of the walls and roofs of Arras. Tents; scattered arms; drums, etc. It is shortly before sunrise. The East is yellow. Sentinels at even intervals. Camp-fires. The* GASCONY CADETS *lie asleep, rolled in their cloaks.* CARBON DE CASTEL-JALOUX *and* LE BRET *are watching. All are very pale and gaunt.* CHRISTIAN *lies sleeping among the others, in his military cape, in the foreground, his face lighted by one of the camp-fires. Silence.*

LE BRET. It is dreadful!
CARBON. Yes. Nothing left.
LE BRET. *Mordious!*

CARBON (*warning him by a gesture to speak lower*). Curse in a whisper! You will wake them! . . . (*To the* CADETS.) Hush! Go to sleep! (*To* LE BRET.) Who sleeps dines.

LE BRET. Who lies awake misses two good things . . . What a situation!

(*A few shots are heard in the distance.*)

CARBON. The devil take their popping! They will wake my young ones! . . . (*To the* CADETS *who lift their heads.*) Go to sleep!

(*The* CADETS *lie down again. Other shots are heard, nearer.*)

ONE OF THE CADETS (*stirring*). The devil! Again?

CARBON. It is nothing. It is Cyrano getting home. (*The heads which had started up, go down again.*)

A SENTINEL (*outside*). *Ventrebleu!* Who goes there?

CYRANO'S VOICE. Bergerac!

THE SENTINEL (*upon the embankment*). *Ventrebleu!* Who goes there?

CYRANO (*appearing at the top of the embankment*). Bergerac, blockhead!

(*He comes down.* LE BRET *goes to him, uneasy.*)

LE BRET. Ah, thank God!

CYRANO (*warning him by a sign to wake no one*). Hush !

LE BRET. Wounded ?

CYRANO. Do you not know that it has become a habit with them to miss me ?

LE BRET. To me, it seems a little excessive that you should, every morning, for the sake of taking a letter, risk . . .

CYRANO (*stopping in front of* CHRISTIAN). I promised that he would write often. (*He looks at* CHRISTIAN). He sleeps. He has grown pale. If the poor little girl could know that he is starving. . . . But handsome as ever !

LE BRET. Go at once and sleep.

CYRANO. Le Bret, do not grumble ! Learn this : I nightly cross the Spanish lines at a point where I know beforehand every one will be drunk.

LE BRET. You ought some time to bring us back some victuals !

CYRANO. I must be lightly burdened to flit through ! . . . But I know that there will be events before the evening. The French, unless I am much mistaken, will eat or die.

LE BRET. Oh, tell us !

CYRANO. No, I am not certain . . . You will see !

CARBON. What a shameful reversal of the order of things, that the besieger should be starved !

LE BRET. Alas! never was more complicated siege than this of Arras : We besiege Arras, and, caught in a trap, are ourselves besieged by the Cardinal-prince of Spain. . .

CYRANO. Someone now ought to come and besiege him.

LE BRET. I am not joking !

CYRANO. Oh, oh !

LE BRET. To think, ungrateful boy, that every day you risk a life precious as yours, solely to carry . . . (CYRANO *goes toward one of the tents.*) Where are you going ?

CYRANO. I am going to write another. (*He lifts the canvas flap, and disappears in the tent.*)

(*Daybreak has brightened. Rosy flush. The city of Arras at the horizon catches a golden light. The report of a cannon is heard, followed at once by a drum-call, very far away, at the left. Other drums beat, nearer. The drum-calls answer one another, come nearer, come very near, and go off, decreasing, dying in the disatnce, to-*

ward the right, having made the circuit of the camp. Noise of general awakening. Voices of officers in the distance).

CARBON (*with a sigh*). The reveille. . . Ah, me! . . . (*The* CADETS *stir in their cloaks, stretch.*) An end to the succulent slumbers! I know but too well what their first word will be!

ONE OF THE CADETS (*sitting up*). I am famished!

OTHER CADET. I believe I am dying!

ALL. Oh! . . .

CARBON. Get up!

THIRD CADET. I cannot go a step!

FOURTH CADET. I have not strength to stir!

FIRST CADET (*looking at himself in a bit of armor.*) My tongue is coated : it must be the weather that is indigestible!

OTHER CADET. Any one who wants them, can have all my titles of nobility for a Chester cheese . . . or part of one!

OTHER CADET. If my stomach does not have something put into it to take up the attention of my gastric juice, I shall retire into my tent before long . . . like Achilles!

OTHER CADET. Yes, they ought to provide us with bread!

CARBON (*going to the tent into which* CYRANO *has retired; low.*) Cyrano!

OTHER CADETS. We cannot stand this much longer!

CARBON (*as above, at the door of the tent*). To the rescue, Cyrano! You who succeed so well always in cheering them, come and make them pluck up spirits!

SECOND CADET (*falling upon* FIRST CADET *who is chewing something*). What are you chewing, man?

FIRTS CADET. A bit of gun-tow fried in axle-grease. . . . using a burganet as frying pan. The suburbs of Arras are not precisely rich in game. . . .

OTHER CADET (*entering*). I have been hunting!

OTHER CADET (*the same*). I have been fishing!

ALL (*rising and falling upon the newcomers*). What?—what did you catch?—A pheasant?—A carp?—Quick! quick! . . . Let us see!

THE HUNTSMAN. A sparrow!

THE ANGLER. A gudgeon!

ALL (*exasperated*). Enough of this! Let us revolt!

CARBON. To the rescue, Cyrano!

(*It is now broad daylight.*)

CYRANO (*coming out of the tent, tranquil, a pen behind his ear, a book in his hand*). What is the matter? (*Silence. To* FIRST CADET.) Why do you go off like that, with that slouching gait?

THE CADET. I have something away down in my heels which inconveniences me.

CYRANO. And what is that?

THE CADET. My stomach.

CYRANO. That is where mine is, too.

THE CADET. Then you too must be inconvenienced.

CYRANO. No. The size of the hollow within me merely increases my sense of my size.

SECOND CADET. I happen to have teeth, long ones!

CYRANO. The better will you bite . . . in good time!

THIRD CADET. I reverberate like a drum!

CYRANO. You will be of use . . . to sound the charge!

OTHER CADET. I have a buzzing in my ears!

CYRANO. A mistake. Empty belly, no ears. You hear no buzzing.

OTHER CADET. Ah, a trifling article to eat . . . and a little oil upon it!

CYRANO (*taking off the* CADET'S *morion and placing it in his hand*). That is seasoned.

OTHER CADET. What is there we could devour?

CYRANO (*tossing him the book he has been holding*). Try the Iliad!

OTHER CADET. The minister, in Paris, makes his four meals a day!

CYRANO. You feel it remiss in him not to send you a bit of partridge?

THE SAME. Why should he not? And some wine!

CYRANO. Richelieu, some Burgundy, if you please?

THE SAME. He might, by one of his capuchins!

CYRANO. By his Eminence, perhaps, in sober gray?

OTHER CADET. No ogre was ever so hungry!

CYRANO. You may have your fill yet of humble-pie!

FIRST CADET (*shrugging his shoulders*). Forever jests! . . . puns! . . . *mots!*

CYRANO. *Le mot* forever, indeed! And I would wish to die, on a fine evening, under a rose-flushed sky, delivering myself of a good *mot* in a good cause! . . . Ah,

yes, the best were indeed, far from feverbed and potion, pierced with the only noble weapon, by an adversary worthy of oneself, to fall upon a glorious field, the point of a sword through his heart, the point of a jest on his lips! . . .

ALL (*in a wail*). I am hungry!

CYRANO (*folding his arms*). God ha' mercy! can you think of nothing but eating? . . . Come here, Bertrandou the fifer, once the shepherd! Take from the double case one of your fifes: breathe into it, play to this pack of guzzlers and of gluttons our homely melodies, of haunting rhythm, every note of which appeals like a little sister, through whose every strain are heard strains of beloved voices . . . mild melodies whose slowness brings to mind the slowness of the smoke upcurling from our native hamlet hearths . . . melodies that seem to speak to a man in his native dialect! . . (*The old fifer sits down and makes ready his fife.*) To-day let the fife, martial unwillingly, be reminded, while your fingers upon its slender stem flutter like birds in a delicate minuet, that before being ebony it was reed; surprise itself by what you make it sing, . . . let it feel restored to it the soul of its youth, rustic and peaceable! (*The*

old man begins playing Languedoc tunes). Listen, Gascons! It is no more, beneath his fingers, the shrill fife of the camp, but the soft flute of the woodland! It is no more, between his lips, the whistling note of battle, but the lowly lay of goatherds leading their flocks to feed! . . . Hark! . . . It sings of the valley, the heath, the forest! . . . of the little shepherd, sunburned under his crimson cap! . . . the green delight of evening on the river! . . . Hark, Gascons all! It sings of Gascony!

(*Every head has drooped; all eyes have grown dreamy; tears are furtively brushed away with a sleeve, the hem of a cloak*).

CARBON (*to* CYRANO, *low*). You are making them weep!

CYRANO. With homesickness! . . . a nobler pain than hunger . . . not physical: mental! I am glad the seat of their suffering should have removed . . . that the gripe should now afflict their hearts!

CARBON. But you weaken them, making them weep!

CYRANO (*beckoning to a drummer*). Never fear! The hero in their veins is quickly roused. It is enough to. . . (*He signs to the drummer who begins drumming.*)

All (*starting to their feet and snatching up their arms*). *Hein?* . . . What? . . . What is it?

Cyrano (*smiling*). You see? . . . The sound of the drum was enough! Farewell dreams, regrets, old homestead, love . . . What comes with the fife with the drum may go . . .

One of the Cadets (*looking off at the back*). Ah! ah! . . . Here comes Monsieur de Guiche!

All the Cadets (*grumbling*). Hoo . . .

Cyrano (*smiling*). Flattering murmur . . .

One of the Cadets. He bores us! . . .

Other Cadet. Showing himself off, with his broad point collar on top of his armor! . . .

Other Cadet. As if lace were worn with steel!

First Cadet. Convenient, if you have a boil on your neck to cover . . .

Second Cadet. There is another courtier for you!

Other Cadet. His uncle's own nephew!

Carbon. He is a Gascon, nevertheless!

First Cadet. Not genuine! . . . Never trust him. For a Gascon, look you, must be something of a madman: nothing is

so deadly to deal with as a Gascon who is completely rational !

LE BRET. He is pale!

OTHER CADET. He is hungry, as hungry as any poor devil of us ! But his corslet being freely embellished with gilt studs, his stomach-ache is radiant in the sun !

CYRANO (*eagerly*). Let us not appear to suffer, either ! You, your cards, your pipes, your dice . . . (*All briskly set themselves to playing with cards and dice, on the heads of drums, on stools, on cloaks spread over the ground. They light long tobacco pipes.*) And I will be reading Descartes. . .

(*He walks to and fro, forward and backward, reading a small book which he has taken from his pocket. Tableau. Enter* DE GUICHE. *Every one appears absorbed and satisfied.* DE GUICHE *is very pale. He goes toward* CARBON.)

DE GUICHE (*to* CARBON). Ah, good-morning. (*They look at each other attentively. Aside, with satisfaction*). He is pale as plaster.

CARBON (*same business*). His eyes are all that is left of him.

DE GUICHE (*looking at the* CADETS). So here are the wrongheaded rascals ? . . .

Yes, gentlemen, it is reported to me on every side that I am your scoff and derision ; that the cadets, highland nobility, Béarn clodhoppers, Périgord baronets, cannot express sufficient contempt for their colonel ; call me intriguer, courtier, find it irksome to their taste that I should wear, with my cuirass, a collar of Genoese point, and never cease to air their wondering indignation that a man should be a Gascon without being a vagabond ! (*Silence. The* CADETS *continue smoking and playing*). Shall I have you punished by your captain ? . . . I do not like to.

CARBON. Did you otherwise, however, . . . I am free, and punish only . . .

DE GUICHE. Ah ? . . .

CARBON. My company is paid by myself, belongs to me. I obey no orders but such as relate to war.

DE GUICHE. Ah, is it so ? Enough, then. I will treat your taunts with simple scorn. My fashion of deporting myself under fire is well known. You are not unaware of the manner in which yesterday, at Bapaume, I forced back the columns of the Comte de Bucquoi ; gathering my men together to plunge forward like an avalanche, three times I charged him. . . .

CYRANO (*without lifting his nose from his book*). And your white scarf?

DE GUICHE (*surprised and self-satisfied*). You heard of that circumstance? . . . In fact, it happened that as I was wheeling about to collect my men for the third charge, I was caught in a stream of fugitives which bore me onward to the edge of the enemy. I was in danger of being captured and cut off with an arquebuse, when I had the presence of mind to untie and let slip to the ground the white scarf which proclaimed my military grade. Thus was I enabled, undistinguished, to withdraw from among the Spaniards, and thereupon returning with my reinspirited men, to defeat them. Well? . . . What do you say to the incident?

(*The* CADETS *have appeared not to be listening; at this point, however, hands with cards and dice-boxes remain suspended in the air; no pipe-smoke is ejected; all expresses expectation.*)

CYRANO. That never would Henry the Fourth, however great the number of his opponents, have consented to diminish his presence by the size of his white plume.

(*Silent joy. Cards fall, dice rattle, smoke upwreathes.*)

DE GUICHE. The trick was successful, however!

(*As before, expectation suspends gambling and smoking.*)

CYRANO. Very likely. But one should not resign the honor of being a target. (*Cards, dice, smoke, fall, rattle, and upwreathe, as before, in expression of increasing glee.*) Had I been at hand when you allowed your scarf to drop—the quality of our courage, monsieur, shows different in this,—I would have picked it up and worn it. . . .

DE GUICHE. Ah, yes,—more of your Gascon bragging! . .

CYRANO. Bragging? . . . Lend me the scarf. I engage to mount, ahead of all, to the assault, wearing it crosswise upon my breast!

DE GUICHE. A Gascon's offer, that too! You know that the scarf was left in the enemy's camp, by the banks of the Scarpe, where bullets since then have hailed . . . whence no one can bring it back!

CYRANO (*taking a white scarf from his pocket and handing it to* DE GUICHE). Here it is.

(*Silence. The* CADETS *smother their laughter behind cards and in dice-boxes.*

DE GUICHE *turns around, looks at them; instantly they become grave; one of them, with an air of unconcern, whistles the tune played earlier by the fifer).*

DE GUICHE (*taking the scarf*). I thank you. I shall be able with this shred of white to make a signal . . . which I was hesitating to make. . . (*He goes to the top of the bank and waves the scarf.*)

ALL. What now ? . . . What is this ?

THE SENTINEL (*at the top of the bank*). A man . . . over there . . . running off . . .

DE GUICHE (*coming forward again*). It is a supposed Spanish spy. He is very useful to us. The information he carries to the enemy is that which I give him,—so that their decisions are influenced by us.

CYRANO. He is a scoundrel !

DE GUICHE (*coolly tying on his scarf*). He is a convenience. We were saying ? . . . Ah, I was about to tell you. Last night, having resolved upon a desperate stroke to obtain supplies, the Marshal secretly set out for Dourlens. The royal sutlers are encamped there. He expects to join them by way of the tilled fields; but, to provide against interference, he took with him troops in such number that, certainly,

if we were now attacked, the enemy would find easy work. Half of the army is absent from the camp.

CARBON. If the Spaniards knew that, it might be serious. But they do not know.

DE GUICHE. They do. And are going to attack us.

CARBON. Ah!

DE GUICHE. My pretended spy came to warn me of their intention. He said, moreover: I can direct the attack. At what point shall it be? I will lead them to suppose it the least strong, and they will centre their efforts against it. I answered: Very well. Go from the camp. Look down the line. Let them attack at the point I signal from.

CARBON (*to the* CADETS). Gentlemen, get ready! (*All get up. Noise of swords and belts being buckled on.*)

DE GUICHE. They will be here in an hour.

FIRST CADET. Oh! . . . if there is a whole hour! . . .

(*All sit down again, and go on with their games.*)

DE GUICHE (*to* CARBON). The main object is to gain time. The Marshal is on his way back.

CARBON. And to gain time?

DE GUICHE. You will be so obliging as to keep them busy killing you.

CYRANO. Ah, this is your revenge!

DE GUICHE. I will not pretend that if I had been fond of you, I would have thus singled out you and yours; but, as your bravery is unquestionably beyond that of others, I am serving my King at the same time as my inclination.

CYRANO. Suffer me, monsieur, to express my gratitude.

DE GUICHE. I know that you affect fighting one against a hundred. You will not complain of lacking opportunity. (*He goes toward the back with* CARBON.)

CYRANO (*to the* CADETS). We shall now be able, gentlemen, to add to the Gascon escutcheon, which bears, as it is, six chevrons, or and azure, the chevron that was wanting to complete it,—blood-red!

(DE GUICHE *at the back speaks low with* CARBON. *Orders are given. All is made ready to repel an attack.* CYRANO *goes toward* CHRISTIAN, *who stands motionless, with folded arms.*)

CYRANO (*laying his hand on* CHRISTIAN'S *shoulder*). Christian?

CHRISTIAN (*shaking his head*). Roxane!

CYRANO. Ah me!

CHRISTIAN. I wish I might at least put my whole heart's last blessing in a beautiful letter!

CYRANO. I mistrusted that it would come to-day. . . (*he takes a letter from his doublet*) and I have written your farewells.

CHRISTIAN. Let me see!

CYRANO. You wish to see it? . . .

CHRISTIAN (*taking the letter*). Yes! (*He opens the letter, begins to read, stops short.*) Ah? . . .

CYRANO. What?

CHRISTIAN. That little round blister?

CYRANO (*hurriedly taking back the letter, and looking at it with an artless air*). A blister?

CHRISTIAN. It is a tear!

CYRANO. It looks like one, does it not? . . . A poet, you see, is sometimes caught in his own snare,—that is what constitutes the interest, the charm! . . . This letter, you must know, is very touching. In writing it I apparently made myself shed tears.

CHRISTIAN. Shed tears? . . .

CYRANO. Yes, because . . . well, to die is not terrible at all . . . but never to see her again, . . . never! . . . that, you know,

is horrible beyond all thinking. . . . And, things having taken the turn they have, I shall not see her . . . (CHRISTIAN *looks at him*) we shall not see her . . . (*Hastily*) you will not see her. . . .

CHRISTIAN (*snatching the letter from him*). Give me the letter !

(*Noise in the distance.*)

VOICE OF A SENTINEL. *Ventrebieu*, who goes there ?

(*Shots. Noise of voices, tinkling of bells.*)

CARBON. What is it ?

THE SENTINEL (*on the top of the bank*). A coach !

(*All run to see.*)

(*Noisy exclamations.*) What ?—In the camp ?—It is driving into the camp ! -It comes from the direction of the enemy ! The devil ! Fire upon it !—No ! the coachman is shouting something !—What does he say ?—He shouts : Service of the King!

DE GUICHE. What ? Service of the King ?

(*All come down from the bank and fall into order.*)

CARBON. Hats off, all !

DE GUICHE (*at the corner*). Service of the King ! Stand back, low rabble, and

give it room to turn around with a handsome sweep !

(*The coach comes in at a trot. It is covered with mud and dust. The curtains are drawn. Two lackeys behind. It comes to a standstill.*)

CARBON (*shouting*). Salute !

(*Drums roll. All the* CADETS *uncover.*)

DE GUICHE. Let down the steps !

(*Two men hurry forward. The coach door opens.*)

ROXANE (*stepping from the carriage*). Good-morning !

(*At the sound of a feminine voice, all the men, in the act of bowing low, straighten themselves. Consternation.*)

DE GUICHE. Service of the King ! You ?

ROXANE. Of the only King ! . . of Love !

CYRANO. Ah, great God !

CHRISTIAN (*rushing to her*). You ! Why are you here ?

ROXANE. This siege lasted too long !

CHRISTIAN. Why have you come ?

ROXANE. I will tell you !

CYRANO (*who at the sound of her voice has started, then stood motionless without venturing to look her way*). God ! . . . can I trust myself to look at her ?

DE GUICHE. You cannot remain here.

ROXANE. But I can,—I can, indeed! Will you favor me with a drum? (*She seats herself upon a drum brought forward for her.*) There! I thank you! (*She laughs.*) They fired upon my carriage. (*Proudly.*) A patrol!—It does look rather as if it were made out of a pumpkin, does it not? like Cinderella's coach! and the footmen made out of rats! (*Blowing a kiss to* CHRISTIAN.) How do you do? (*Looking at them all.*) You do not look overjoyed! . . . Arras is a long way from Paris, do you know it? (*Catching sight of* CYRANO.) Cousin, delighted!

CYRANO (*coming toward her*). But how did you . . . ?

ROXANE. How did I find the army? Dear me, cousin, that was simple: I followed straight along the line of devastation. . . . Ah, I should never have believed in such horrors had I not seen them! Gentlemen, if that is the service of your King, I like mine better!

CYRANO. But this is mad! . . . By what way did you come?

ROXANE. Way? . . . I drove through the Spaniards' camp.

First Cadet. Ah, what will keep lovely woman from her way !

De Guiche. But how did you contrive to get through their lines ?

Le Bret. That must have been difficult . . .

Roxane. No, not very. I simply drove through them, in my coach, at a trot. If a hidalgo, with arrogant front, showed likely to stop us, I put my face at the window, wearing my sweetest smile, and, those gentlemen being,—let the French not grudge my saying so !—the most gallant in the world, . . . I passed !

Carbon. Such a smile is a passport, certainly ! . . . But you must have been not unfrequently bidden to stand and deliver where you were going ?

Roxane. Not unfrequently, you are right. Whereupon I would say, "I am going to see my lover !" At once, the fiercest looking Spaniard of them all would gravely close my carriage door ; and, with a gesture the King might emulate, motion aside the musket-barrels levelled at me ; and, superb at once for grace and haughtiness, bringing his spurs together, and lifting his plumed hat, bow low and say, "Pass, senorita, pass !"

CHRISTIAN. But, Roxane . . .

ROXANE. I said, "My lover!" yes, forgive me!—You see, if I had said, "My husband!" they would never have let me by!

CHRISTIAN. But . . .

ROXANE. What troubles you?

DE GUICHE. You must leave at once

ROXANE. I?

CYRANO. At once!

LE BRET. As fast as you can.

CHRISTIAN. Yes, you must.

ROXANE. But why?

CHRISTIAN (*embarrassed*). Because . . .

CYRANO (*embarrassed too*). In three quarters of an hour . . .

DE GUICHE (*the same*). Or an hour . . .

CARBON (*the same*). You had much better . . .

LE BRET (*the same*). You might . . .

ROXANE. I shall remain. You are going to fight.

ALL. Oh, no! . . . No!

ROXANE. He is my husband! (*She throws herself in* CHRISTIAN'S *arms.*) Let me be killed with you!

CHRISTIAN. How your eyes shine!

ROXANE. I will tell you why they shine!

DE GUICHE (*desperately*). It is a post of horrible probabilities!

ROXANE (*turning toward him*). What—of horrible? . . .

CYRANO. In proof of which he appointed us to it! . . .

ROXANE. Ah, you wish me made a widow?

DE GUICHE. I swear to you . . .

ROXANE. No! Now I have lost all regard. . . . Now I will surely not go. . . . Besides, I think it fun!

CYRANO. What? The précieuse contained a heroine?

ROXANE. Monsieur de Bergerac, I am a cousin of yours!

ONE OF THE CADETS. Never think but that we will take good care of you!

ROXANE (*more and more excited*). I am sure you will, my friends!

OTHER CADET. The whole camp smells of iris!

ROXANE. By good fortune I put on a hat that will look well in battle! (*Glancing toward* DE GUICHE.) But perhaps it is time the Count should go.—The battle might begin.

DE GUICHE. Ah, it is intolerable!—I am going to inspect my guns, and coming back.—You still have time: think better of it!

ROXANE. Never!

(*Exit* De Guiche).

Christian (*imploring*). Roxane!

Roxane. No!

First Cadet. She is going to stay!

All (*hurrying about, pushing one another, snatching things from one another*) A comb!—Soap!—My jacket is torn, a needle!—A ribbon!—Lend me your pocket-mirror!—My cuffs!—Curling-irons!—A razor!

Roxane (*to* Cyrano, *who is still pleading with her*). No! Nothing shall prevail upon me to stir from this spot!

Carbon (*after having, like the others, tightened his belt, dusted himself, brushed his hat, straightened his feather, pulled down his cuffs, approaches* Roxane, *and ceremoniously*). It is, perhaps, proper, since you are going to stay, that I should present to you a few of the gentlemen about to have the honor of dying in your presence . . . (Roxane *bows, and stands waiting, with her arm through* Christian's.) Baron Peyrescous de Colignac!

The Cadet (*bowing*). Madame!

Carbon (*continuing to present the* Cadets) Baron de Casterac de Cahuzac,—Vidame de Malgouyre Estressac Lesbas d'Escarabiot,—Chevalier d'Antignac-

Juzet,—Baron Hillot de Blagnac-Saléchan de Castel Crabioules . . .

ROXANE. But how many names have you apiece?

BARON HILLOT. Innumerable!

CARBON (*to* ROXANE). Open your hand with the handkerchief!

ROXANE (*opens her hand; the handkerchief drops*). Why?

(*The whole company starts forward to pick it up*).

CARBON (*instantly catching it*). My company had no flag! Now, my word, it will have the prettiest one in the army!

ROXANE (*smiling*). It is rather small!

CARBON (*fastening the handkerchief on the staff of his captain's spear*). But it is lace!

ONE OF THE CADETS (*to the others*). I could die without a murmur, having looked upon that beautiful face, if I had so much as a walnut inside me! . . .

CARBON (*who has overheard, indignant*). Shame! . . . to talk of food when an exquisite woman . . .

ROXANE. But the air of the camp is searching, and I myself am hungry: Patties, jellied meat, light wine . . . are

what I should like best! Will you kindly bring me some?

(*Consternation*).

One of the Cadets. Bring you some?

Other Cadet. And where, great God, shall we get them?

Roxane (*quietly*). In my coach.

All. What?

Roxane. But there is much to be done, carving and boning and serving. Look more closely at my coachman, gentlemen, and you will recognize a precious individual: the sauces, if we wish, can be warmed over . . .

The Cadets (*springing toward the coach*). It is Ragueneau! (*Cheers.*) Oh! Oh!

Roxane (*watching them*). Poor fellows!

Cyrano (*kissing her hand*). Kind fairy!

Ragueneau (*standing upon the box-seat like a vendor at a public fair*). Gentlemen!

(*Enthusiasm*).

The Cadets. Bravo! Bravo!

Ragueneau. How should the Spaniards, when so much beauty passed, suspect the repast?

(*Applause.*)

Cyrano (*low to* Christian). Hm! Hm! Christian!

RAGUENEAU. Absorbed in gallantry, no heed took they . . . (*he takes a dish from the box seat*) . . . of galantine !

(*Applause. The galantine is passed from hand to hand.*)

CYRANO (*low to* CHRISTIAN). A word with you. . .

RAGUENEAU. Venus kept their eyes fixed upon herself, while Diana slipped past with the . . . (*he brandishes a joint*) game !

(*Enthusiasm. The joint is seized by twenty hands at once.*)

CYRANO (*low to* CHRISTIAN). I must speak with you.

ROXANE (*to the* CADETS *who come forward, their arms full of provisions*). Spread it all upon the ground !

(*Assisted by the two imperturbable footmen who were on the back of the coach, she arranges everything on the grass.*)

ROXANE (*to* CHRISTIAN *whom* CYRANO *is trying to draw aside*). Make yourself useful, sir !

(CHRISTIAN *comes and helps her.* CYRANO *gives evidence of uneasiness.*)

RAGUENEAU. A truffled peacock !

FIRST CADET (*radiant, comes forward cutting off a large slice of ham*). Praise the pigs, we shall not go to our last fight

with nothing in our b . . . (*correcting himself at sight of* ROXANE) hm . . . stomachs!

RAGUENEAU (*flinging the carriage cushions*). The cushions are stuffed with snipe!

(*Tumult. The cushions are ripped open. Laughter. Joy.*)

RAGUENEAU (*flinging bottles of red wine*). Molten ruby! (*Bottles of white wine.*) Fluid topaz!

ROXANE (*throwing a folded tablecloth to* CYRANO). Unfold the cloth: Hey! . . . be nimble!

RAGUENEAU (*waving one of the coach lanterns*). Each lantern is a little larder!

CYRANO (*low to* CHRISTIAN, *while together they spread the cloth*). I must speak with you before you speak with her . . .

RAGUENEAU. The handle of my whip, behold, is a sausage!

ROXANE (*pouring wine, dispensing it*). Since we are the ones to be killed, *morbleu*, we will not fret ourselves about the rest of the army! Everything for the Gascons! . . . And if De Guiche comes, nobody must invite him! (*Going from one to the other.*) Gently! You have time . . . You must not eat so fast! There, drink. What are you crying about?

FIRST CADET. It is too good !

ROXANE. Hush ! White wine or red ?—Bread for Monsieur de Carbon !—A knife ! —Pass your plate !—You prefer crust ?—A little more ?—Let me help you.—Champagne ?—A wing ?—

CYRANO (*following* ROXANE, *his hands full of dishes, helping her*). I adore her !

ROXANE (*going to* CHRISTIAN). What will you take ?

CHRISTIAN. Nothing !

ROXANE. Oh, but you must take something ! This biscuit—in a little Muscatel, —just a little ?

CHRISTIAN (*trying to keep her from going*). Tell me what made you come ?

ROXANE. I owe myself to those poor fellows . . . . Be patient, . . . By and by . . .

LE BRET (*who had gone toward the back to pass a loaf of bread on the end of a pike to the* SENTINEL *upon the earthwork*). De Guiche !

CYRANO. Presto ! Vanish basket, flagon, platter and pan ! Hurry ! Let us look as if nothing were ! (*To* RAGUENEAU.) Take a flying leap on to your box !—Is everything hidden ?

(*In a wink, all the eatables have been pushed into the tents, or hidden under clothes, cloaks, hats. Enter* DE GUICHE, *hurriedly; he stops short, sniffing the air. Silence.*)

DE GUICHE. What a good smell!

ONE OF THE CADETS (*singing, with effect of mental abstraction*). To lo lo lo. . . .

DE GUICHE (*stopping and looking at him closely*). What is the matter with you—you, there? You are red as a crab.

THE CADET. I? Nothing . . . It is just my blood. . . . We are going to fight: it tells . . .

OTHER CADET. Poom . . . poom . . . poom . . .

DE GUICHE (*turning*). What is this?

THE CADET (*slightly intoxicated*). Nothing . . . A song . . . just a little song.

DE GUICHE. You look in good spirits, my boy!

THE CADET. Danger affects me that way!

DE GUICHE (*calling* CARBON DE CASTEL-JALOUX *to give an order*). Captain, I . . . (*He stops at sight of his face.*) *Peste!* You look in good spirits, too.

CARBON (*flushed, holding a bottle behind him; with an evasive gesture*). Oh! . . .

DE GUICHE. I had a cannon left over, which I have ordered them to place (*he points in the wing*) there, in that corner, and which your men can use, if necessary . . .

ONE OF THE CADETS (*swaying from one foot to the other*). Charming attention !

OTHER CADET (*smiling sugarily*). Our thanks for your gracious thoughtfulness !

DE GUICHE. Have they gone mad ? . . . (*Drily.*) As you are not accustomed to handling a cannon, look out for its kicking . . .

FIRST CADET. Ah, pfft ! . . .

DE GUICHE (*going toward him, furious*). But . . .

THE CADET. A cannon knows better than to kick a Gascon !

DE GUICHE (*seizing him by the arm and shaking him*). You are all tipsy: on what ?

THE CADET (*magnificently*). The smell of powder !

DE GUICHE (*shrugs his shoulders, pushes aside the* CADET, *and goes rapidly toward* ROXANE). Quick, Madame ! what have you condescended to decide ?

ROXANE. I remain.

DE GUICHE. Retire, I beseech you !

ROXANE. No.

DE GUICHE. If you are determined, then . . . Let me have a musket !

CARBON. What do you mean ?

DE GUICHE. I, too, will remain.

CYRANO. At last, Monsieur, an instance of pure and simple bravery !

FIRST CADET. Might you be a Gascon, lace collar notwithstanding ?

DE GUICHE. I do not leave a woman in danger.

SECOND CADET (*to* FIRST CADET)). Look here ! I think he might be given something to eat !

(*All the food reappears, as if by magic.*)

DE GUICHE (*his eyes brightening*). Provisions ?

THIRD CADET. Under every waistcoat !

DE GUICHE (*mastering himself, haughtily*). Do you imagine that I will eat your leavings ?

CYRANO (*bowing*). You are improving !

DE GUICHE (*proudly, falling at the last of the sentence into a slightly* GASCON *accent*). I will fight before I eat !

FIRST CADET (*exultant*). Fight ! Eat ! . . . He spoke with an accent !

DE GUICHE (*laughing*). I did ?

THE CADET. He is one of us !

(*All fall to dancing.*)

CARBON (*who a moment before disappeared behind the earthworks, reappearing at the top*). I have placed my pikemen. They are a determined troop . . .

(*He points at a line of pikes projecting above the bank*).

DE GUICHE (*to* ROXANE, *bowing*). Will you accept my hand and pass them in review ?

(*She takes his hand ; they go toward the bank. Every one uncovers and follows.*)

CHRISTIAN (*going to* CYRANO, *quickly*). Speak ! Be quick !

(*As* ROXANE *appears at the top of the the bank, the pikes disappear, lowered in a salute, and a cheer goes up ;* ROXANE *bows.*)

PIKEMEN (*outside*). Vivat !

CHRISTIAN. What did you want to tell me ?

CYRANO. In case Roxane . . .

CHRISTIAN. Well ?

CYRANO. Should speak to you of the letters . . .

CHRISTIAN. Yes, the letters. I know !

CYRANO. Do not commit the blunder of appearing surprised . . .

CHRISTIAN. At what ?

CYRANO. I must tell you! . . . It is quite simple, and merely comes into my mind to-day because I see her. You have . . .

CHRISTIAN. Hurry!

CYRANO. You . . . you have written to her oftener than you suppose . . .

CHRISTIAN. Oh, have I?

CYRANO. Yes. It was my business, you see. I had undertaken to interpret your passion, and sometimes I wrote without having told you I should write.

CHRISTIAN. Ah?

CYRANO. It is very simple.

CHRISTIAN. But how did you succeed since we have been so closely surrounded, in . . . ?

CYRANO. Oh, before daybreak I could cross the lines . . .

CHRISTIAN (*folding his arms*). Ah, that is very simple, too? . . . And how many times a week have I been writing? Twice? Three times? Four? . . .

CYRANO. More.

CHRISTIAN. Every day?

CYRANO. Yes, every day . . . twice.

CHRISTIAN (*violently*). And you cared so much about it that you were willing to brave death. . . .

CYRANO (*seeing* ROXANE *who returns.*) Be still . . . Not before her! (*He goes quickly into his tent.*)

(CADETS *come and go at the back.* CARBON *and* DE GUICHE *give orders.*)

ROXANE (*running to* CHRISTIAN). And now, Christian . . .

CHRISTIAN (*taking her hands*). And now, you shall tell me why, over these fearful roads, through these ranks of rough soldiery, you risked your dear self to join me?

ROXANE. Because of the letters!

CHRISTIAN. The . . . ? What did you say?

ROXANE. It is through your fault that I have been exposed to such and so many dangers. It is your letters that have gone to my head! Ah, think how many you have written me in a month, each one more beautiful . . .

CHRISTIAN. What? . . . Because of a few little love letters . . .

ROXANE. Say nothing! You cannot understand! Listen: The truth is that I took to idolizing you one evening, when, below my window, in a voice I did not know before, your soul began to reveal itself. . . . Think then what the effect should be of

your letters, which have been like your voice heard constantly for one month, your voice of that evening, so tender, caressing . . . You must bear it as you can, I have come to you! Prudent Penelope would not have stayed at home with her eternal tapestry, if Ulysses, her lord, had written as you write . . . but, impulsive as Helen, have tossed aside her yarns, and flown to join him!

CHRISTIAN. But . . .

ROXANE. I read them, I re-read them, in reading I grew faint . . . I became your own indeed! Each fluttering leaf was like a petal of your soul wafted to me . . . In every word of those letters, love is felt as a flame would be felt,—love, compelling, sincere, profound . . .

CHRISTIAN. Ah, sincere, profound? . . . You say that it can be felt, Roxane?

ROXANE. He asks me!

CHRISTIAN. And so you came? . . .

ROXANE. I came—oh Christian, my own, my master! If I were to kneel at your feet you would lift me, I know. It is my soul therefore which kneels, and never can you lift it from that posture!—I came to implore your pardon—as it is fitting, for we are both perhaps about to die!—your

pardon for having done you the wrong, at first, in my shallowness, of loving you . . . for mere looking !

CHRISTIAN (*in alarm*). Ah, Roxane! . . .

ROXANE. Later, dear one, grown less shallow—similar to a bird which flutters before it can fly,—your gallant exterior appealing to me still, but your soul appealing equally, I loved you for both! . . .

CHRISTIAN. And now ?

ROXANE. Now at last yourself are vanquished by yourself: I love you for your soul alone . . .

CHRISTIAN (*drawing away*). Ah, Roxane!

ROXANE. Rejoice ! For to be loved for that wherewith we are clothed so fleetingly must put a noble heart to torture. . . . Your dear thought at last casts your dear face in shadow : the harmonious lineaments whereby at first you pleased me, I do not see them, now my eyes are open!

CHRISTIAN. Oh !

ROXANE. You question your own triumph ?

CHRISTIAN (*sorrowfully*). Roxane!

ROXANE. I understand, you cannot conceive of such a love in me ?

CHRISTIAN. I do not wish to be loved

like that! I wish to be loved quite simply . . .

ROXANE. For that which other women till now have loved in you? Ah, let yourself be loved in a better way

CHRISTIAN. No . . . I was happier before! . . .

ROXANE. Ah, you do not understand! It is now that I love you most, that I truly love you. It is that which makes you, you —can you not grasp it?—that I worship . . . And did you no longer walk our earth like a young martial Apollo . . .

CHRISTIAN. Say no more!

ROXANE. Still would I love you! . . . Yes, though a blight should have fallen upon your face and form . . .

CHRISTIAN. Do not say it!

ROXANE. But I do say it, . . . I do!

CHRISTIAN. What? If I were ugly, distinctly, offensively?

ROXANE. If you were ugly, dear, I swear it!

CHRISTIAN. God!

ROXANE. And you are glad, profoundly glad?

CHRISTIAN (*in a smothered voice*). Yes . . .

ROXANE. What is it?

CHRISTIAN (*pushing her gently away*). Nothing. I have a word or two to say to some one : your leave, for a second . . .

ROXANE. But . . .

CHRISTIAN (*pointing at a group of* CADETS *at the back*). In my selfish love, I have kept you from those poor brothers. . . . Go, smile on them a little, before they die, dear . . . . go!

ROXANE (*moved*). Dear Christian!

(*She goes toward the* GASCONS *at the back ; they respectfully gather around her.*)

CHRISTIAN (*calling toward* CYRANO'S *tent*). Cyrano!

CYRANO (*appears, armed for battle*). What is it ? . . . How pale you are!

CHRISTIAN. She does not love me any more!

CYRANO. What do you mean ?

CHRISTIAN. She loves you.

CYRANO. No!

CHRISTIAN. She only loves my soul!

CYRANO. No!

CHRISTIAN. Yes! Therefore it is you she loves . . . and you love her . . .

CYRANO. I . . .

CHRISTIAN. I know it!

CYRANO. It is true.

CHRISTIAN. To madness!

CYRANO. More.

CHRISTIAN. Tell her then.

CYRANO. No!

CHRISTIAN. Why not?

CYRANO. Look at me!

CHRISTIAN. She would love me grown ugly.

CYRANO. She told you so?

CHRISTIAN. With the utmost frankness!

CYRANO. Ah! I am glad she should have told you that! But, believe me, believe me, place no faith in such a mad asseveration! Dear God, I am glad such a thought should have come to her, and that she should have spoken it,—but believe me, do not take her at her word: Never cease to be the handsome fellow you are . . . . She would not forgive me!

CHRISTIAN. That is what I wish to discover.

CYRANO. No! no!

CHRISTIAN. Let her choose between us! You shall tell her everything.

CYRANO. No . . . No . . . I refuse the ordeal!

CHRISTIAN. Shall I stand in the way of your happiness because my outside is not not so much amiss?

CYRANO. And I ? shall I destroy yours, because, thanks to the hazard that sets us upon earth, I have the gift of expressing . . . what you perhaps feel ?

CHRISTIAN. You shall tell her everything !

CYRANO. He persists in tempting me . . . It is a mistake . . . and cruel !

CHRISTIAN. I am weary of carrying about, in my own self, a rival !

CYRANO. Christian !

CHRISTIAN. Our marriage . . . contracted without witnesses . . . can be annulled . . . if we survive !

CYRANO. He persists ! . . .

CHRISTIAN. Yes. I will be loved for my sole self, or not at all !—I am going to see what they are about. Look ! I will walk to the end of the line and back . . . Tell her, and let her pronounce between us.

CYRANO. She will pronounce for you.

CHRISTIAN. I can but hope she will ! (*calling*) Roxane !

CYRANO. No ! No !

ROXANE (*coming forward*). What is it ?

CHRISTIAN. Cyrano has something to tell you . . . something important !

(ROXANE *goes hurriedly to* CYRANO. *Exit* CHRISTIAN.)

ROXANE. Something important?

CYRANO (*distracted*). He is gone! . . . (*To* ROXANE.) Nothing whatever! He attaches—but you must know him of old!—he attaches importance to trifles . . .

ROXANE (*quickly*). He did not believe what I told him a moment ago? . . . I saw that he did not believe . . .

CYRANO (*taking her hand*). But did you in very truth tell him the truth?

ROXANE. Yes. Yes. I should love him even . . . (*She hesitates a second.*)

CYRANO (*smiling sadly*). You do not like to say it before me?

ROXANE. But . . .

CYRANO. I shall not mind! . . . Even if he were ugly?

ROXANE. Yes . . . Ugly. (*Musket shots outside.*) They are firing!

CYRANO (*ardently*). Dreadfully ugly?

ROXANE. Dreadfully.

CYRANO. Disfigured?

ROXANE. Disfigured!

CYRANO. Grotesque?

ROXANE. Nothing could make him grotesque . . . to me.

CYRANO. You would love him still?

ROXANE. I believe that I should love him more . . . if that were possible !

CYRANO (*losing his head, aside*). My God, perhaps she means it . . . perhaps it is true . . . and that way is happiness ! (*To* ROXANE.) I . . . Roxane . . . listen !

LE BRET (*comes in hurriedly; calls softly*). Cyrano !

CYRANO (*turning*). *Hein ?*

LE BRET. Hush ! (*He whispers a few words to* CYRANO.)

CYRANO (*letting* ROXANE'S *hand drop, with a cry*). Ah ! . . .

ROXANE. What ails you ?

CYRANO (*to himself, in consternation*). It is finished !

(*Musket reports.*)

ROXANE. What is it ? What is happening ? Who is firing ? (*She goes to the back to look off.*)

CYRANO. It is finished. . . . My lips are sealed for evermore !

(CADETS *come in, attempting to conceal something they carry among them ; they surround it, preventing* ROXANE'S *seeing it.*)

ROXANE. What has happened ?

CYRANO (*quickly stopping her as she starts toward them*). Nothing !

ROXANE. These men ? . . .

CYRANO (*drawing her away*). Pay no attention to them!

ROXANE. But what were you about to say to me before ?

CYRANO. What was I about to say ? . . . Oh, nothing! . . . Nothing whatever, I assure you. (*Solemnly.*) I swear that Christian's spirit, that his soul, were . . . (*in terror, correcting himself*) are the greatest that . . .

ROXANE. Were ? . . . (*With a great cry.*) Ah ! . . . (*Runs to the group of* CADETS, *and thrusts them aside.*)

CYRANO. It is finished !

ROXANE (*seeing* CHRISTIAN *stretched out in his cloak*). Christian !

LE BRET (*to* CYRANO). At the enemy's first shot !

(ROXANE *throws herself on* CHRISTIAN'S *body. Musket reports. Clashing of swords. Tramping. Drums.*)

CARBON (*sword in hand*). The attack ! To your muskets ! (*Followed by the* CADETS *he goes to the further side of the earthworks.*)

ROXANE. Christian!

CARBON'S VOICE (*beyond the earthworks*). Make haste !

ROXANE. Christian!

CARBON. Fall into line!

ROXANE. Christian!

CARBON. Measure . . . match!

(RAGUENEAU *has come running in with water in a steel cap.*)

CHRISTIAN (*in a dying voice*). Roxane!

CYRANO (*quick, low in* CHRISTIAN'S *ear, while* ROXANE, *distracted, dips into the water a fragment of linen torn from her breast to bind his wound*). I have told her everything! . . . You are still the one she loves!

(CHRISTIAN *closes his eyes.*)

ROXANE. What, dear love?

CARBON. Muzzle . . . high!

ROXANE (*to* CYRANO). He is not dead? . . .

CARBON. Open charge . . . with teeth!

ROXANE. I feel his cheek grow cold against my own!

CARBON. Take aim!

ROXANE. A letter on his breast. . . . (*She opens it.*) To me!

CYRANO (*aside*). My letter!

CARBON. Fire!

(*Musket shots. Cries. Roar of battle.*)

CYRANO (*trying to free his hand which*

ROXANE *clasps kneeling*). But, Roxane, they are fighting.

ROXANE (*clinging*). No! . . . Stay with me a little! . . . He is dead. You are the only one that truly knew him. . . . (*She cries subduedly.*) Was he not an exquisite being, . . . an exceptional, marvellous being? . . .

CYRANO (*standing bareheaded*). Yes, Roxane.

ROXANE. A poet without his peer, . . . one verily to reverence?

CYRANO. Yes, Roxane.

ROXANE. A sublime spirit?

CYRANO. Yes, Roxane.

ROXANE. A profound heart, such as the profane could never have understood . . . a soul as noble as it was charming? . . .

CYRANO (*firmly*). Yes, Roxane.

ROXANE (*throwing herself on* CHRISTIAN'S *body*). And he is dead!

CYRANO (*aside, drawing his sword*). And I have now only to die, since, without knowing it, she mourns my death in his!

(*Trumpets in the distance.*)

DE GUICHE (*reappears on the top of the bank, bareheaded, his forehead bloody; in a thundering voice*). The signal they

promised ! The flourish of trumpets! . . . The French are entering the camp with supplies ! . . Stand fast a little longer !

ROXANE. Upon his letter . . . blood, . . . tears !

A VOICE (*outside, shouting*). Surrender!

VOICES OF THE CADETS. No !

RAGUENEAU (*who from the top of the coach is watching the battle beyond the bank*). The conflict rages hotter! . . .

CYRANO (*to* DE GUICHE *pointing at* ROXANE). Take her away ! . . . I am going to charge.

ROXANE (*kissing the letter, in a dying voice*). His blood ! . . . his tears !

RAGUENEAU (*leaping from the coach and running to* ROXANE). She is fainting !

DE GUICHE (*at the top of the bank, to the* CADETS, *madly*). Stand fast !

VOICE (*outside*). Surrender !

VOICES OF THE CADETS. No !

CYRANO (*to* DE GUICHE). Your courage none will question . . . (*Pointing at* ROXANE.) Fly for the sake of saving her !

DE GUICHE (*Runs to* ROXANE *and lifts her in his arms*). So be it ! But we shall win the day if you can hold out a little longer . . .

CYRANO. We can. (*To* ROXANE, *whom* DE GUICHE, *helped by* RAGUENEAU, *is carrying off insensible.*) Good-bye, Roxane!

(*Tumult. Cries.* CADETS *reappear, wounded, and fall upon the stage.* CYRANO *dashing forward to join the combatants is stopped on the crest of the bank by* CARBON *covered with blood.*)

CARBON. We are losing ground . . . I have got two halberd wounds . . .

CYRANO (*yelling to the* GASCONS). Steadfast! . . . Never give them an inch! . . . Brave boys! (*To* CARBON.) Fear nothing! I have various deaths to avenge: Christian's and all my hopes'! (*They come down.* CYRANO *brandishes the spear at the head of which* ROXANE'S *handkerchief is fastened.*) Float free, little cobweb flag, embroidered with her initials! (*He drives the spear-staff into the earth; shouts to the* CADETS.) Fall on them, boys! . . . Crush them! (*To the fifer.*) Fifer, play!

(*The fifer plays. Some of the wounded get to their feet again. Some of the* CADETS, *coming down the bank, group themselves around* CYRANO *and the little flag. The coach, filled and covered with*

men, bristles with muskets and becomes a redoubt.)

ONE OF THE CADETS (*appears upon the top of the bank backing while he fights; he cries*). They are coming up the slope! (*Falls dead.*)

CYRANO. We will welcome them!

(*Above the bank suddenly rises a formidable array of enemies. The great banners of the Imperial Army appear.*)

CYRANO. Fire!

(*General discharge.*)

CRY (*among the hostile ranks.*) Fire!

(*Shots returned.* CADETS *drop on every side*).

A SPANISH OFFICER (*taking off his hat*). What are these men, so determined all to be killed?

CYRANO (*declaiming, as he stands in the midst of flying bullets.*)

They are the Gascony Cadets
Of Carbon de Castel Jaloux;
Famed fighters, liars, desperates . . .

(*He leaps forward, followed by a handful of survivors.*)

They are the Gascony Cadets! . . .

(*The rest is lost in the confusion of battle.*)

(*Curtain.*)

ACT FIFTH.

CYRANO'S GAZETTE.

Fifteen years later, 1655. *The park belonging to the convent of the Sisters of the Cross, in Paris.*

Superb shade-trees. At the left, the house; several doors opening on to broad terrace with steps. In the centre of the stage, huge trees standing alone in a clear oval space. At the right, first wing, a semicircular stone seat, surrounded by large box-trees.

All along the back of the stage, an avenue of chestnut-trees, which leads, at the right, fourth wing, to the door of a chapel seen through trees. Through the double row of trees overarching the avenue are seen lawns, other avenues, clumps of trees, the further recesses of the park, the sky.

The chapel opens by a small side-door into a colonnade, overrun by a scarlet creeper; the colonnade comes forward and

is lost to sight behind the box-trees at the right.

It is Autumn. The leaves are turning, above the still fresh grass. Dark patches of evergreens, box and yew. Under each tree a mat of yellow leaves. Fallen leaves litter the whole stage, crackle underfoot, lie thick on the terrace and the seats.

Between the seat at the right and the tree in the centre, a large embroidery frame, in front of which a small chair. Baskets full of wools, in skeins and balls. On the frame, a piece of tapestry, partly done.

At the rise of the curtain, nuns come and go in the park; a few are seated on the stone seat around an older nun; leaves are falling.

SISTER MARTHA (*to* MOTHER MARGARET). Sister Claire, after putting on her cap went back to the mirror, to see herself again.

MOTHER MARGARET (*to* SISTER CLAIRE). It was unbecoming, my child.

SISTER CLAIRE. But Sister Martha, to-day, after finishing her portion, went back to the tart for a plum. I saw her!

MOTHER MARGARET (*to* SISTER MARTHA). My child, it was ill done.

SISTER CLAIRE. I merely glanced! . . .

SISTER MARTHA. The plum was about so big! . . .

MOTHER MARGARET. This evening, when Monsieur Cyrano comes, I will tell him.

SISTER CLAIRE (*alarmed*). No! He will laugh at us!

SISTER MARTHA. He will say that nuns are very vain!

SISTER CLAIRE. And very greedy!

MOTHER MARGARET. And really very good.

SISTER CLAIRE. Mother Margaret, is it not true that he has come here every Saturday in the last ten years?

MOTHER MARGARET. Longer! Ever since his cousin brought among our linen coifs her coif of crape, the worldly symbol of her mourning, which settled like a sable bird amidst our flock of white some fourteen years ago.

SISTER MARTHA. He alone, since she took her abode in our cloister, has art to dispel her never-lessening sorrow.

ALL THE NUNS. He is so droll!—It is merry when he comes!—He teases us!—He is delightful!—We are greatly attached to him!—We are making Angelica paste to offer him!

SISTER MARTHA. He is not, however, a very good Catholic!

SISTER CLAIRE. We will convert him.

THE NUNS. We will! We will!

MOTHER MARGARET. I forbid your renewing that attempt, my children. Do not trouble him: he might not come so often!

SISTER MARTHA. But . . . God!

MOTHER MARGARET. Set your hearts at rest: God must know him of old!

SISTER MARTHA. But every Saturday, when he comes, he says to me as soon as he sees me, "Sister, I ate meat, yesterday!"

MOTHER MARGARET. Ah, that is what he says? . . . Well, when he last said it, he had eaten nothing for two days.

SISTER MARTHA. Mother!

MOTHER MARGARET. He is poor.

SISTER MARTHA. Who told you?

MOTHER MARGARET. Monsieur Le Bret.

SISTER MARTHA. Does no one offer him assistance?

MOTHER MARGARET. No, he would take offence.

(*In one of the avenues at the back, appears* ROXANE, *in black, wearing a widow's coif and long mourning veil;* DE GUICHE,

markedly older, magnificently dressed, walks beside her. They go very slowly. MOTHER MARGARET *gets up.*)

MOTHER MARGARET. Come, we must go within. Madame Magdeleine is walking in the park with a visitor.

SISTER MARTHA (*low to* SISTER CLAIRE.) Is not that the Marshal-duke de Grammont ?

SISTER CLAIRE (*looking*). I think it is !

SISTER MARTHA. He has not been to see her in many months !

THE NUNS. He is much engaged !—The Court !—The Camp !—

SISTER CLAIRE. Cares of this world !

(*Exeunt.* DE GUICHE *and* ROXANE *come forward silently, and stop near the embroidery frame. A pause.*)

DE GUICHE. And so you live here, uselessly fair, always in mourning ?

ROXANE. Always.

DE GUICHE. As faithful as of old ?

ROXANE. As faithful.

DE GUICHE (*after a time*). Have you forgiven me ?

ROXANE. Since I am here.

(*Other silence.*)

DE GUICHE. And he was really such a rare being ?

ROXANE. To understand, one must have known him!

DE GUICHE. Ah, one must have known him! . . . Perhaps I did not know him well enough. And his last letter, still and always, against your heart?

ROXANE. I wear it on this velvet, as a more holy scapular.

DE GUICHE. Even dead, you love him?

ROXANE. It seems to me sometimes he is but half dead, that our hearts have not been severed, that his love still wraps me round, no less than ever living!

DE GUICHE (*after another silence*). Does Cyrano come here to see you?

ROXANE. Yes, often. That faithful friend fulfils by me the office of gazette. His visits are regular. He comes: when the weather is fine, his armchair is brought out under the trees. I wait for him here with my work; the hour strikes; on the last stroke, I hear—I do not even turn to see who comes!—his cane upon the steps; he takes his seat; he rallies me upon my never-ending tapestry; he tells off the events of the week, and . . . (LE BRET *appears on the steps*) Ah, Le Bret! (LE BRET *comes down the steps*)! How does your friend?

LE BRET. Ill.

THE DUKE. Oh !

ROXANE. He exaggerates ! . . .

LE BRET. All is come to pass as I foretold : neglect ! poverty ! his writings ever breeding him new enemies ! Fraud he attacks in every embodiment : usurpers, pious pretenders, plagiarists, asses in lions' skins . . . all ! He attacks all !

ROXANE. No one, however, but stands in profound respect of his sword. They will never succeed in silencing him.

DE GUICHE (*shaking his head*). Who knows ?

LE BRET. What I fear is not the aggression of man ; what I fear is loneliness and want and winter creeping upon him like stealthy wolves in his miserable attic ; they are the insidious foes that will have him by the throat at last ! . . . Every day he tightens his belt by an eyelet ; his poor great nose is pinched, and turned the sallow of old ivory ; the worn black serge you see him in is the only coat he has !

DE GUICHE. Ah, there is one who did not succeed ! . . . Nevertheless, do not pity him too much.

LE BRET (*with a bitter smile*). Marshal ! . . .

DE GUICHE. Do not pity him too much: he signed no bonds with the world ; he has lived free in his thought as in his actions.

LE BRET (*as above*). Duke . . .

DE GUICHE (*haughtily*). I know, yes: I have everything, he has nothing. . . . But I should like to shake hands with him. (*Bowing to* ROXANE.) Good-bye.

ROXANE. I will go with you to the door.

(DE GUICHE *bows to* LE BRET *and goes with* ROXANE *toward the terrace steps.*)

DE GUICHE (*stopping, while she goes up the steps*). Yes, sometimes I envy him. You see, when a man has succeeded too well in life, he is not unlikely to feel—dear me! without having committed any very serious wrong!—a multitudinous disgust of himself, the sum of which does not constitute a real remorse, but an obscure uneasiness ; and a ducal mantle, while it sweeps up the stairs of greatness, may trail in its furry lining a rustling of sere illusions and regrets, as, when you slowly climb toward those doors, your black gown trails the withered leaves.

ROXANE (*ironical*). Are you not unusually pensive ? . . .

DE GUICHE. Ah, yes! (*As he is about to leave, abruptly.*) Monsieur Le Bret!

(*To* ROXANE.) Will you allow me? A word. (*He goes to* LE BRET, *and lowering his voice.*) It is true that no one will dare overtly to attack your friend, but many have him in particular disrelish; and some one was saying to me yesterday, at the Queen's, "It seems not unlikely that this Cyrano will meet with an accident."

LE BRET. Ah? . . .

DE GUICHE. Yes. Let him keep indoors. Let him be cautious.

LE BRET (*lifting his arms toward Heaven*). Cautious! . . . He is coming here. I will warn him. Warn him! . . . Yes, but . . .

ROXANE (*who has been standing at the head of the steps, to a nun who comes toward her*). What is it?

THE NUN. Ragueneau begs to see you, Madame.

ROXANE. Let him come in. (*To* DE GUICHE *and* LE BRET.) He comes to plead distress. Having determined one day to be an author, he became in turn precentor . . .

LE BRET. Bath-house keeper . . .

ROXANE. Actor . . .

LE BRET. Beadle . . .

ROXANE. Barber . . .

LE BRET. Arch-lute teacher . . .

ROXANE. I wonder what he is now!

RAGUENEAU (*entering precipitately*). Ah, Madame! (*He sees* LE BRET.) Monsieur!

ROXANE (*smiling*). Begin telling your misfortunes to Le Bret. I am coming back.

RAGUENEAU. But, Madame . . .

(ROXANE *leaves without listening, with the* DUKE. RAGUENEAU *goes to* LE BRET).

RAGUENEAU. It is better so. Since you are here, I had liefer not tell her! Less than half an hour ago, I was going to see your friend. I was not thirty feet from his door, when I saw him come out. I hurried to catch up with him. He was about to turn the corner. I started to run, when from a window below which he was passing—was it pure mischance? It may have been!—a lackey drops a block of wood . . .

LE BRET. Ah, the cowards! . . . Cyrano!

RAGUENEAU. I reach the spot, and find him . . .

LE BRET. Horrible!

RAGUENEAU. Our friend, Monsieur, our poet, stretched upon the ground, with a great hole in his head!

LE BRET. He is dead ?

RAGUENEAU. No, but . . . God have mercy ! I carried him to his lodging . . . Ah, his lodging ! You should see that lodging of his !

LE BRET. Is he in pain ?

RAGUENEAU. No, Monsieur, he is unconscious.

LE BRET. Has a doctor seen him ?

RAGUENEAU. One came . . . out of good nature.

LE BRET. My poor, poor Cyrano ! . . . We must not tell Roxane outright. And the doctor ? . . .

RAGUENEAU. He talked . . . I hardly grasped . . . of fever . . . cerebral inflammation ! Ah, if you should see him, with his head done up in cloths ! . . . Let us hurry . . . No one is there to tend him . . . And he might die if he attempted to get up !

LE BRET (*dragging* RAGUENEAU *off at the right*). This way. Come, it is shorter through the chapel.

ROXANE (*appearing at the head of the steps, catching sight of* LE BRET *hurrying off through the colonnade which leads to the chapel side-door*). Monsieur Le Bret ! (LE BRET *and* RAGUENEAU *make their escape*

without answering.) Le Bret not turning back when he is called ? . . . Poor Ragueneau must be in some new trouble ! (*She comes down the steps.*) How beautiful . . . how beautiful, this golden-hazy waning day of September at its wane ! My sorrowful mood, which the exuberant gladness of April offends, Autumn, the dreamy and subdued, lures on to smile . . . (*She sits down at her embroidery frame. Two* NUNS *come from the house bringing a large armchair which they place under the tree.*) Ah, here comes the classic armchair in which my old friend always sits !

SISTER MARTHA. The best in the convent parlor !

ROXANE. I thank you, sister. (*The nuns withdraw.*) He will be here in a moment. (*She adjusts the embroidery frame before her.*) There ! The clock is striking . . . My wools ! . . . The clock has struck ? . . . I wonder at this ! . . . Is it possible that for the first time he is late ? . . . It must be that the sister who keeps the door . . . my thimble ? ah, here it is ! . . . is detaining him to exhort him to repentance . . . (*A pause.*) She exhorts him at some length ! . . . He cannot be much longer . . . A withered leaf ! (*She brushes*

away the dead leaf which has dropped on the embroidery.) Surely nothing could keep . . . My scissors ? . . . in my work-bag ! . . . could keep him from coming !

A Nun (*appearing at the head of the steps*). Monsieur de Bergerac !

Roxane (*without turning round.*) What was I saying ? . . . (*She begins to embroider.* Cyrano *appears, exceedingly pale, his hat drawn down over his eyes. The* Nun *who has shown him into the garden, withdraws. He comes down the steps very slowly, with evident difficulty to keep on his feet, leaning heavily on his cane.* Roxane *proceeds with her sewing.*) Ah, these dull soft shades ! . . How shall I match them ? (*To* Cyrano, *in a tone of friendly chiding.*) After fourteen years, for the first time you are late !

Cyrano (*who has reached the armchair and seated himself, in a jolly voice which contrasts with his face.*) Yes, it seems incredible ! I am savage at it. I was detained, spite of all I could do ! . . .

Roxane. By ? . . .

Cyrano. A somewhat inopportune call.

Roxane (*absent-minded, sewing*). Ah, yes . . . some troublesome fellow !

CYRANO. Cousin, it was a troublesome Madam.

ROXANE. You excused yourself ?

CYRANO. Yes. I said, "Your pardon, but this is Saturday, on which day I am due in certain dwelling. On no account do I ever fail. Come back in an hour !"

ROXANE (*lightly*). Well, she will have to wait some time to see you. I shall not let you go before evening.

CYRANO. Perhaps . . . I shall have to go a little earlier. (*He closes his eyes and is silent a moment.*)

(SISTER MARTHA *is seen crossing the park from the chapel to the terrace.* ROXANE *sees her and beckons to her by a slight motion of her head.*)

ROXANE (*to* CYRANO). Are you not going to tease Sister Martha to-day ?

CYRANO (*quickly, opening his eyes*). I am indeed! (*In a comically gruff voice.*) Sister Martha, come nearer! (*The* NUN *demurely comes toward him.*) Ha! ha! ha! Beautiful eyes, ever studying the ground!

SISTER MARTHA (*lifting her eyes and smiling*). But . . . (*She sees his face and makes a gesture of surprise*). Oh!

CYRANO (*low, pointing at* ROXANE). Hush! . . . It is nothing! (*In a swag-*

gering voice, aloud.) Yesterday, I ate meat!

SISTER MARTHA. I am sure you did! (*Aside.*) That is why he is so pale! (*Quickly, low.*) Come to the refectory presently. I shall have ready for you there a good bowl of broth . . . You will come!

CYRANO. Yes, yes, yes.

SISTER MARTHA. Ah, you are more reasonable to-day!

ROXANE (*hearing them whisper*). She is trying to convert you?

SISTER MARTHA. Indeed I am not!

CYRANO. It is true, you, usually almost discursive in the holy cause, are reading me no sermon! You amaze me! (*With comical fury.*) I will amaze you, too! Listen, you are authorized . . . (*With the air of casting about in his mind, and finding the jest he wants.*) Ah, now I shall amaze you! to . . . pray for me, this evening . . . in the chapel.

ROXANE. Oh! oh!

CYRANO (*laughing*). Sister Martha . . . lost in amazement!

SISTER MARTHA (*gently*). I did not wait for your authorization. (*She goes in.*)

CYRANO (*turning to* ROXANE, *who is bending over her embroidery*). The devil,

tapestry . . . the devil, if I hope to live to see the end of you !

ROXANE. I was waiting for that jest.

(*A slight gust of wind makes the leaves fall.*)

CYRANO. The leaves !

ROXANE (*looking up from her work and gazing off toward the avenues*). They are the russet gold of a Venetian beauty's hair . . . Watch them fall !

CYRANO. How consummately they do it ! In that brief fluttering from bough to ground, how they contrive still to put beauty ! And though foredoomed to moulder upon the earth that draws them, they wish their fall invested with the grace of a free bird's flight !

ROXANE. Serious, you ?

CYRANO (*remembering himself*). Not at all, Roxane !

ROXANE. Come, never mind the falling leaves ! Tell me the news, instead . . . Where is my budget ?

CYRANO. Here it is !

ROXANE. Ah !

CYRANO (*growing paler and paler, and struggling with pain*). Saturday, the nineteenth : The king having filled his dish eight times with Cette preserves, and

emptied it, was taken with a fever; his distemper, for high treason, was condemned to be let blood, and now the royal pulse is rid of febriculosity! On Sunday: at the Queen's great ball, were burned seven hundred and sixty-three wax candles; our troops, it is said, defeated Austrian John; four sorcerers were hanged; Madame Athis's little dog had a distressing turn, the case called for a . . .

ROXANE. Monsieur de Bergerac, leave out the little dog!

CYRANO. Monday, . . . nothing, or next to it: Lygdamire took a fresh lover.

ROXANE. Oh!

CYRANO (*over whose face is coming a change more and more marked*). Tuesday: the whole Court assembled at Fontainebleau. Wednesday, the fair Monglat said to Count Fiesco "No!" Thursday, Mancini, Queen of France, . . . or little less. Twenty-fifth, the fair Monglat said to Count Fiesco "Yes!" And Saturday, the twenty-sixth . . . (*He closes his eyes. His head drops on his breast. Silence.*)

ROXANE (*surprised at hearing nothing further, turns, looks at him and starts to her feet in alarm*). Has he fainted? (*She runs to him, calling.*) Cyrano!

CYRANO (*opening his eyes, in a faint voice*). What is it? . . . What is the matter! (*He sees* ROXANE *bending over him, hurriedly readjusts his hat, pulling it more closely over his head, and shrinks back in his armchair in terror*). No! no! I assure you, it is nothing! . . . Do not mind me!

ROXANE. But surely . . .

CYRANO. It is merely the wound I received at Arras . . . Sometimes . . . you know . . . even now . . .

ROXANE. Poor friend!

CYRANO. But it is nothing . . . It will pass . . . (*He smiles with effort*). It has passed.

ROXANE. Each one of us has his wound: I too have mine. It is here, never to heal, that ancient wound . . . (*She places her hand on her breast.*) It is here, beneath the yellowing letter on which are still faintly visible tear-drops and drops of blood!

(*The light is beginning to grow less*).

CYRANO. His letter? . . . Did you not once say that some day . . . you might show it to me?

ROXANE. Ah! . . . Do you wish? . . . His letter?

CYRANO. Yes . . . to-day . . . I wish to . . .

ROXANE (*handing him the little bag from her neck*). Here!

CYRANO. I may open it?

ROXANE. Open it . . . read! (*She goes back to her embroidery frame, folds it up, orders her wools.*)

CYRANO. "Good-bye, Roxane! I am going to die!"

ROXANE (*stopping in astonishment*). You are reading it aloud?

CYRANO (*reading*). "It is fated to come this evening, beloved, I believe! My soul is heavy, oppressed with love it had not time to utter . . . and now Time is at end! Never again, never again shall my worshipping eyes . . ."

ROXANE. How strangely you read his letter!

CYRANO (*continuing*). " . . . whose passionate revel it was, kiss in its fleeting grace your every gesture. One, usual to you, of tucking back a little curl, comes to my mind . . . and I cannot refrain from crying out . . .

ROXANE. How strangely you read his letter! . . .

(*The darkness gradually increases*).

CYRANO. "and I cry out: Good-bye!"

ROXANE. You read it . . .

CYRANO. "my dearest, my darling, . . . my treasure . . ."

ROXANE. . . . in a voice . . .

CYRANO. ". . . my love! . . ."

ROXANE. . . . in a voice . . . a voice which I am not hearing for the first time!

(ROXANE *comes quietly nearer to him, without his seeing it; she steps behind his armchair, bends noiselessly over his shoulder, looks at the letter. The darkness deepens.*)

CYRANO. ". . . My heart never desisted for a second from your side . . . and I am and shall be in the world that has no end, the one who loved you without measure, the one . . ."

ROXANE (*laying her hand on his shoulder*). How can you go on reading? It is dark. (CYRANO *starts, and turns round; sees her close to him, makes a gesture of dismay and hangs his head. Then, in the darkness which has completely closed round them, she says slowly, clasping her hands.*) And he, for fourteen years, has played the part of the comical old friend who came to cheer me!

CYRANO. Roxane!

ROXANE. So it was you.

CYRANO. No, no, Roxane!

ROXANE. I ought to have divined it, if only by the way in which he speaks my name!

CYRANO. No, it was not I!

ROXANE. So it was you!

CYRANO. I swear to you . . .

ROXANE. Ah, I detect at last the whole generous imposture: The letters . . . were yours!

CYRANO. No!

ROXANE. The tender fancy, the dear folly, . . . yours!

CYRANO. No!

ROXANE. The voice in the night, was yours!

CYRANO. I swear to you that it was not!

ROXANE. The soul . . . was yours!

CYRANO. I did not love you, no!

ROXANE. And you loved me!

CYRANO. Not I . . . it was the other!

ROXANE. You loved me!

CYRANO. No!

ROXANE. Already your denial comes more faintly!

CYRANO. No, no, my darling love, I did not love you!

ROXANE. Ah, how many things within the hour have died . . . how many have been born ! Why, why have been silent these long years, when on this letter, in which he had no part, the tears were yours ?

CYRANO (*handing her the letter*). Because . . . the blood was his.

ROXANE. Then why let the sublime bond of this silence be loosed to-day ?

CYRANO. Why ?

(LE BRET *and* RAGUENEAU *enter running.*)

LE BRET. Madness ! Monstrous madness ! . . . Ah, I was sure of it ! There he is !

CYRANO (*smiling and straightening himself*). *Tiens !* Where else ?

LE BRET. Madame, he is likely to have got his death by getting out of bed !

ROXANE. Merciful God ! A moment ago, then . . . that faintness . . . that . . . ?

CYRANO. It is true. I had not finished telling you the news. And on Saturday, the twenty-sixth, an hour after sundown, Monsieur de Bergerac died of murder done upon him. (*He takes off his hat ; his head is seen wrapped in bandages.*)

ROXANE. What is he saying ? . . .

Cyrano ? . . . Those bandages about his head ? . . . Ah, what have they done to you ? . . . Why ? . . .

CYRANO. "Happy who falls, cut off by a hero, with an honest sword through his heart !" I am quoting from myself ! . . . Fate will have his laugh at us ! . . . Here am I killed, in a trap, from behind, by a lackey, with a log ! Nothing could be completer ! In my whole life I shall have not had anything I wanted . . . not even a decent death !

RAGUENEAU. Ah, monsieur ! . . .

CYRANO. Ragueneau, do not sob like that ! (*Holding out his hand to him.*) And what is the news with you, these latter days, fellow-poet ?

RAGUENEAU (*through his tears*). I am candle-snuffer at Molière's theatre.

CYRANO. Molière !

RAGUENEAU. But I intend to leave no later than to-morrow. Yes, I am indignant ! Yesterday, they were giving Scapin, and I saw that he has appropriated a scene of yours.

LE BRET. A whole scene ?

RAGUENEAU. Yes, monsieur. The one in which occurs the famous "What the devil was he doing in . . ."

LE BRET. Molière has taken that from you !

CYRANO. Hush ! hush ! He did well to take it ! (*To* RAGUENEAU.) The scene was very effective, was it not ?

RAGUENEAU. Ah, monsieur, the public laughed . . . laughed !

CYRANO. Yes, to the end, I shall have been the one who prompted . . . and was forgotten ! (*To* ROXANE.) Do you remember that evening on which Christian spoke to you from below the balcony ? There was the epitome of my life : while I have stood below in darkness, others have climbed to gather the kiss and glory ! It is well done, and on the brink of my grave I approve it : Molière has genius . . . Christian was a fine fellow ! (*At this moment, the chapel bell having rung, the* NUNS *are seen passing at the back, along the avenue, on their way to service.*) Let them hasten to their prayers . . . the bell is summoning them . . .

ROXANE (*rising and calling*). Sister! Sister!

CYRANO (*holding her back*). No! No! do not leave me to fetch anybody! When you came back I might not be here to rejoice . . . (*The* NUNS *have gone into the*

chapel; the organ is heard.) I longed for a little music . . . it comes in time!

ROXANE. I love you . . . you shall live!

CYRANO. No! for it is only in the fairy-tale that the shy and awkward prince when he hears the beloved say "I love you!" feels his ungainliness melt and drop from him in the sunshine of those words! . . . But you would always know full well, dear Heart, that there had taken place in your poor slave no beautifying change!

ROXANE. I have hurt you . . . I have wrecked your life, I! . . . I!

CYRANO. You? . . . The reverse! Woman's sweetness I had never known. My mother . . . thought me unflattering. I had no sister. Later, I shunned Love's cross-road in fear of mocking eyes. To you I owe having had, at least, among the gentle and fair, a friend. Thanks to you there has passed across my life the rustle of a woman's gown.

LE BRET (*calling his attention to the moonlight peering through the branches*). Your other friend, among the gentle and fair, is there . . . she comes to see you!

CYRANO (*smiling to the moon*). I see her!

ROXANE. I never loved but one . . . and twice I lose him!

CYRANO. Le Bret, I shall ascend into the opalescent moon, without need this time of a flying-machine!

ROXANE. What are you saying?

CYRANO. Yes, it is there, you may be sure, I shall be sent for my Paradise. More than one soul of those I have loved must be apportioned there . . . There I shall find Socrates and Galileo!

LE BRET (*in revolt*). No! No! It is too senseless, too cruel, too unfair! So true a poet! So great a heart! To die . . . like this! To die! . . .

CYRANO. As ever . . . Le Bret is grumbling!

LE BRET (*bursting into tears*). My friend! My friend!

CYRANO (*lifting himself, his eyes wild*). They are the Gascony Cadets! . . . Man in the gross . . . Eh, yes! . . . the weakness of the weakest point . . .

LE BRET. Learned . . . even in his delirium! . . .

CYRANO. Copernicus said . . .

ROXANE. Oh!

CYRANO. But what the devil was he

doing . . . and what the devil was he doing in that galley ?

Philosopher and physicist,
Musician, rhymester, duellist,
Explorer of the upper blue,
Retorter apt with point and point,
Lover as well,—not for his peace !
Here lies Hercule Savinien
De Cyrano de Bergerac,
Who was everything . . . but of account!

But, your pardons, I must go . . . I wish to keep no one waiting . . . See, a moonbeam, come to take me home ! (*He has dropped in his chair;* ROXANE'S *weeping calls him back to reality; he looks at her and gently stroking her mourning veil.*) I do not wish . . . indeed, I do not wish . . . that you should sorrow less for Christian, the comely and the kind ! Only I wish that when the everlasting cold shall have seized upon my fibres, this funereal veil should have a twofold meaning, and the mourning you wear for him be worn for me too . . . a little !

ROXANE. I promise . . .

CYRANO (*seized with a great shivering, starts to his feet*). Not there ! No ! Not in an elbow-chair ! (*All draw nearer to*

help him.) Let no one stay me! No one! (*He goes and stands against the tree.*) Nothing but this tree! (*Silence.*) She comes, Mors, the indiscriminate Madam! . . . Already I am booted with marble . . . gauntleted with lead! (*He stiffens himself.*) Ah, since she is on her way, I will await her standing . . . (*He draws his sword.*) Sword in hand!

LE BRET. Cyrano!

ROXANE (*swooning*). Cyrano!

(*All start back, terrified.*)

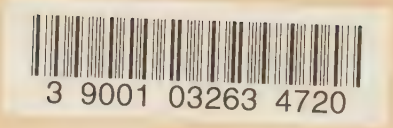
CYRANO. I believe she is looking at me . . . that she dares to look at my nose, the bony baggage who has none! (*He raises his sword.*) What are you saying? That it is no use? . . . I know it! But one does not fight because there is hope of winning! No! . . . no! . . . it is much finer to fight when it is no use! . . . What are all those? You are a thousand strong? . . . Ah, I know you now . . . all my ancient enemies! . . . Hypocrisy? . . . (*He beats with his sword, in the vacancy.*) Take this! and this! Ha! Ha! Compromises? . . . and Prejudices? and dastardly Expedients? (*He strikes.*) That I should come to terms, I? . . . Never! Never! . . . Ah, you are there too, you,

bloated and pompous Silliness! I know full well that you will lay me low at last . . . No matter: whilst I have breath, I will fight you, I will fight you, I will fight you! (*He waves his sword in great sweeping circles, and stops, panting.*) Yes, you have wrested from me everything, laurel as well as rose . . . Work your wills! . . . Spite of your worst, something will still be left me to take whither I go . . . and to-night when I enter God's house, in saluting, broadly will I sweep the azure threshold with what despite of all I carry forth unblemished and unbent . . . (*He starts forward, with lifted sword.*) . . . and that is . . . (*The sword falls from his hands, he staggers, drops in the arms of* Le Bret *and* Ragueneau.)

Roxane (*bending over him and kissing his forehead*). That is? . . .

Cyrano (*opens his eyes again, recognizes her and says with a smile*). . . . My plume!

(*Curtain.*)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